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Lectorium Rosicrucianum

THE BOGOMIL PAPERS

The Congres
in Saint-Félix-
Lauragais



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'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood under the Sign of Love'. Under that motto a congress took place in May 2017, in St. Félix Lauragais (France). This conference, organized by the Bulgarian scholar Damyan Popchristov and the association 'Bulgarians in the Pays d'Autan', wanted to contribute to a spiritual unification of Europe "from a historical and spiritual perspective." The underlying motive was the mission of Nikètas in 1167, now 850 years ago. The purpose was to investigate how the crucial Bogomil-Cathar synod over which Nikètas presided, could promote a similar 'convivencia' in our modern age. The various texts bore the character of testimonies, while the meeting itself instigated a great impulse. The participants experienced that the pure and intelligent Christianity of the Spirit is still internationally active. It is spiritually very much alive in a time in which our society changes drastically. And again, the Occitan region is the scene of action.

The 'Council of the Cathars' in 1167 was led by Nikètas, patriarch of the seven churches of Asia. During this synod – with the allure of a great medieval knight and damsel meeting – tens of the sons and daughters of the nobility were sealed again with the consolamentum of the living. It was proof that the Cathar 'Church of the Spirit' formed the heart of Occitan society. The young Esclarmonde of Foix was also present.

It was in 2017 that Damyan Popchristov brought an international group of speakers together such as the English Anne Baring, the grande dame of esoteric thinking on the impact of the Light Message through the ages. She proved how this "Church of the Spirit" was firmly anchored in the ancient knowledge of the connection between humans and cosmos. Eduard Berga discussed an old Bogomil text. Dick van Niekerk treated the impact of the Bogomil version of the 'Our Father'. Pierre Gohar spoke of the "universal community of the rose" – which forms a meeting place for all light-sparks and Petra Augrandjean opened the day with a specific focus on the work of the patriarch Nikètas.

Pentagram offers only a selection from the various presentations. Not all texts were available at the time of publication of this issue. For the "World images", the editors chose modern images of some cities and places where the two brotherhoods undertook their work in earlier times. The accompanying texts are derived from David Lorimer's contribution.

Cover and above

Detail of a 'Steak' or Stéle at Donja Zgosza
in central Bosnia. Photo by Toso Dabac

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The texts accompanying the World Images are quotes from David Lorimer's contribution to the Conference 'Freedom, Equality and Brotherhood under the Sign of Love', in St. Félix de Lauragais, entitled 'Bogomils, Cathars and the Universal White Brotherhood'

The photos of World Images are from places where these groups were active in the past.

'All growth originates with creative individuals or small minorities of individuals, and their task is twofold: first the achievement of their inspiration or discovery, and secondly the conversion to this new way of life of the society to which they belong.'

© Photo: Young people in a square in Timisoara (Romania) © Adonis, Always Wanderlust

The spiritual mission of Nikètas of Constantinople

The religion of Occitania has always been a simple pure Christianity, a Christianity according to the doctrine of John: not the sword, not the dogma, but Love.

It was the church of the Paraclete and those who belonged to it called it affectionately “Joana”, their beloved, the church of the spirit, of the wisdom of the holy spirit. Originally their church was known as the *ecclesia francae*. Later on, after 1167, after the meeting of its leaders in St. Félix, this was the name for the northern French diocese, which from then on came under the leadership of Bishop Robert d’Espèron.

In the tenth and eleventh century, there were few controversies in this area. Theirs was a simple Christianity that both nobility and the people experienced collectively. It did not come from Bulgaria, or Italy, nor from the Balkan. It was born and grown in freedom and nurtured in Spain in the early Middle Ages. We’ll get back to this later. The people of the Tarusks, with their centre Tarascon, had been free since Roman times. Under the government of two consuls they remained autonomous, protected largely by the counts and their castles, and as by a miracle they remained free. Perhaps unnoticed because of the vast natural shelter of

the Pyrenees mountains, their religious experience could develop in peace. Where to the ordinary Occitanian his religion came full of legends, stories, and personal interpretation, the initiated *bonhommes* guarded a Johannine line, and experienced their direct connection to the primal Christianity in small groups or circles with dedication, consecration, initiation, person to person: *Ancien* to *Jeune*.

Thus we may say that around the middle of the twelfth century the Christian Occitan mind was like a latent atmosphere, without a hierarchical organization, special rites or official worship procedures. It did not aim at deviation, it was not controversial but an open religious feeling in which God the Father is everything and encompasses everything. In which the Son serves as the Light – which is consciousness – which elucidates the Father in his creation, and the Holy Spirit which is a great mystery that can only be grasped by the *Homme-esprit*, the spiritual man.

Never ever did the Pyrenean *croyants* place a church, priest or pope between the human soul and the divine world and



Dancing woman. Stele in Gosica Han at Konjic, Herzegovina

CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX:
PETRA AUGRANDJEAN, PETER HUIJS

certainly not a predatory Capet, King of France!-“God is love” was their motto, a love that could be an active force in every sensitive soul. Love is the starting point of the human state, love makes everything grow and thus also the human soul: *formation – reformation – transformation*. That is pure Christianity! God is love!

They had no “evil” god, no Ahriman, no hell. This world is evil enough, mixed as it is with the influence of the fallen angels and the fallen children of God. They were also not occultists or esoterics as is sometimes thought but were diligent students of nature. The *bonhommes* knew the medicinal characteristics of the plants and in this sense they went through town and country to their families, their friends and compatriots, in sickness, life and death, but also to assist them in all their daily activities. In Occitania religious belief was like breathing, a matter of course, a spiritual matter, not a mental system. It was included, inclusive, enveloping. Man and woman were equal and equally valued, and rooted in a country that was accustomed to being free.

The name Cathars is misleading and not one that was used in medieval times. They were known as the *Fidèles d’Amour*, the faithful ones of Love and the easy name *bonshommes* or *bonas femnas* was a synonym that was used in everyday language. It was an experience that found its religious response in every layer of society. In the province of *Septimania* of the old Roman Empire (Aquitaine), of which the infrastructures were still everywhere, the *ecclesia francae* resonated in all the steps of the social ladder, and therefore *bonhommes* were also found in all levels of society. Around 1956 it was beautifully described by A. Gadal:

“The spirit that blows like the wind in space, had paved the way for Marcus of Memphis, who was filled with deep wisdom. In 350 he had taught all of Spain. His disciple Priscillianus brought the temple of the spirit, the church of love, to Gaul (ancient France), to Belgium, to which also Holland belonged at that time, and to Germany. [...] In 380 Priscillianus was captured and decapitated in Trier, Germany. That is now more than 1500 years ago!

At the end of the eighth century Félix of Urgell (before 781 Lyon, 818) who became bishop of Andorra and the Sabarthez area, like many other followers of Priscillianus before him, followed the same way. In



the year 800 he was also imprisoned in Aachen.

Since then an unbelievable number of people were sacrificed in order to break the irresistible movement of the Spirit that went through the world! Henry III ordered *bonshommes* or *parfaits* as they were also called, to be captured in 1052, in Goslar, Germany. Tanchelm was brought to death in Antwerp in 1115 [...]“

Around the year 1000 this faith of southern France became more visible, at the time when the infrastructure initiated by Charlemagne, lost its strong central organization. This gave the local noble families and houses more influence. In that free atmosphere, the emerging Romanesque culture thrived, casting ideals in its own language, which was spiritual and noble. Sons and daughters of the noble houses followed this lead to obtain important positions. They were the leading group. They provided a shelter in which faith and the people could flourish. And in the loose unforced structure of that day there was freedom of thought and mutual understanding in a minimally organised *ecclesia*.

Roger-Bernard – Count of Foix at the time of the visit of Nikêtas – had, despite his impetuous character and his strong ties with the kingdom of Barcelona, a soft spot for the people who professed this pure form of faith. People who did not seek material goods – who radiated a strange gentleness and whose unusual sobriety was accompanied by selfless charity. These characteristics were ideal to advance health and humane coexistence in his area. His wife Cécile, a daughter of the house of Trencavel, was a support and an anchor for these new Christians. His children – including Esclarmonde who would later become a Cathar princess – cherished these ideals

and absorbed the stories and teachings that the *Fidèles d’amour* brought to the castles during their visits.

On the other hand, you couldn’t say that this new coexistence, this ideal *convivencia*, was embraced by the entire elite of the Occitan society.

Because the pope and the king – whose influences were more and more increasing – were suspiciously watching these developments in the land of Toulouse.

For us, people of the twenty-first century, it is almost impossible to evaluate the view and perception of medieval man on the world.

Our modern perception prefers to attribute a mysterious character to the Cathar teachings, full of secrets and esoteric knowledge. One cannot be more mistaken.

Medieval man had a great need to be part of and to be active within the vested order of society. Their natural order is the order that God has given to the world and the social order results from it. There is a king far away and there is a count or a gentleman farmer in closer proximity. There is a bishop far away and there is a deacon in the region. This order is both his soil as well as the field of existence in which medieval man wanted to spend his life.

They did not think in a language or texts or in the theoretical frameworks that historiography, looking backwards, wants to impose on them.

Philosophical thinking, reading and writing in the Middle Ages were reserved for the relative few, in the monasteries, in ecclesiastical palaces and offices, and these were of a different order. In the castles and fortresses there were tournaments and minstrel competitions. The common man would not be part of these circles except when delivering

The medieval man has a great need to live within the order of things

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Three scenes from an image of the 13th-century manuscript by Wolfgang von Eschenbach’s *Parcival*. Above: *Parcival* at the ‘round’ table with King Arthur; middle: *Parcival* in a duel with *Feirefiz*; below: *Parcival* recognizes *Feirefiz* as his half-brother\



agricultural and other trade ware. This social order is all-determining, and man plays a role herein that the cosmos has given to him or to her. In the Doat reports, the Inquisition reports that were so aptly incorporated by Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie in his book “Montaillou”, the local victims are shown to have a spiritual and philosophical view on life that is childlike and sometimes even naive. This is perhaps shocking to those who like to see a Cathar dualistic, esoteric religion with strict ideas but this was not so. These developed later under the pressure of the institutions of their opponents, as well as through the influence of Nikêtas. Whoever keeps this in mind can probably imagine Occitan Christianity in its free, non-hierarchical and certainly not dogmatic form.

Nevertheless – and this is very special – the path of initiation – *reformation* – was open to everyone. The parfaits founded houses in which they would receive the weak and the sick. They also founded communities and schools where the first principles of free Christianity were taught and taken in, in a spirit of unity and love. The enthusiasm for a pure life, focused on that other kingdom within, the kingdom of Christ, made many people receptive to this attitude of life, and the lengthy preparation of the parfait. The Occitan mind did not find its essence in political or theological arguments, and neither in the social prin-

Coats of arms of the grand masters of the Knights Templar (Order of the Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon)



ciples that anticipated civil initiatives, nor in organized churches. These were principles that would unfold only in the following centuries. Those were external incentives that played a part in the Aquitanian drama. A drama that actually began to emerge from the moment that Nikètas introduced a new structure to the communities in six dioceses in southern France. This more or less caused the threat to the institutional authority of the Church of Rome to become real. And although this incidentally happened earlier, precisely because after 1167 an *organized grouping of churches* was created in southern France, we see the start of a *structural* destruction of the culture, the society and free Christianity from southern France. In 1179, during the Council of Latranen, the Albigensian crusade is proclaimed.

Nikètas not only set up an organizational structure. He also suggested a simple religious service called the *sermone* consisting of a call, a collective repentance, forgiveness, a blessing. Averse to the Roman excesses he directed the gathered group towards an apostolic simplicity, going back to Christ and his disciples: a bishop with twelve deacons. In the seven communities of Asia the bishoprics were led by a *filius major* and a *filius minor*, an older and younger brother, and deacons. Among them a free autonomy prevailed and during the council of prelates at St. Félix he advised the new dioceses of France to maintain the same attitude towards each other: to respect each other's independence.

This was no problem at all for the inhabitants of Aquitaine. For included herein was, in an outward sense, the essence of the spirit of Occitania itself. In their thinking freedom dominated, a freedom in which every man was autonomous. A free man, standing in openness

facing heaven, in which soul and spirit powers could freely form and express themselves. As from the year 1000 it freely evolved as the old structures of Charlemagne became weaker. That is why from that time the first pyres start to appear.

It was a bright spirit that pervaded the country as a spiritual springtide, in which there was a natural understanding of the inner kingdom, a look forward to that realm of Love, which was available for every Christian who could experience "a good ending". It was absolutely genuine, it was natural, it was the true order, and it was secured in the *consolamentum* of the dying. *Formation – reformation – transformation*. In every scientific discussion this is always forgotten, or put aside as being unimportant.

Yet herein lies the essence. Each Occitanian understood Christ when he says: "My kingdom is not of this world." They were looking forward to that kingdom in a spontaneous childlike manner. The known outer world was a world of servitude, of growth, of formation. It was a starting point and an opportunity. It was given to every man, it was the opportunity that was given to every life. For *boni homine* and *bone femine* it was the relatively short time that was allotted to them – that was available to them to come to *reformation*, to inner re-creation. "Create in me a new heart" sang the psalmist. The suffering of others was also their suffering. That was their simple Christianity. Through their servitude and compassion, accompanied by study and dedication, they came to initiation: transformation, in which the *homme-esprit*, the spiritual man, the astral man, came into being. And it was this man that belonged to the kingdom. If there was any talk of dualism at all – which is actually a much too rigid concept for the *fidèles d'amour*

of Occitania – it is the knowledge that there is a hidden stature within man, an angel-stature, latent in the inner being, similarly as they saw within the world a purely spiritual sphere, belonging to the stars of the cosmos. They derived their inspiration from this source. Through this they found the strength to bear the immense suffering that awaited them. And it explains the otherwise baffling testimonies, that in many cases they threw themselves into the flames, holding their hands before their countenance. Whatever then was the reason to invite Nikètas to Occitania, that wise and authoritative bishop of Constantinople? Was his presence actually needed? They had heard that this patriarch had been traveling for several years and had worked in Bulgaria and Lombardy, where he reinstated the original structure of the first Christian communities. They hoped that through him they could reconnect with the source from which stemmed their belief also. The Occitan Christianity is not Manichean, not Paulician, not Bogomelan, but the original Christianity. In May 1167 Nikètas came to confirm this in Saint-Félix de Carman. Due to him, the original hierarchy was reaffirmed: for each area a bishop with a circle of twelve deacons was ordained, all under the spiritual blessing of a patriarch. Many new candidates, most of them related to the noble houses of the region, received the *consolamentum* of the living from his hands. At the same time the new and old bishops discussed the organization of their church which was extended from four to six departments.

Eighty years later, the first act of the drama of the Albigensians was completed, the Romanesque culture destroyed and, despite the flames of countless pyres, thousands of souls had acquired their

freedom on the way of the stars in the spiritual fields of the kingdom of Love.

Again eighty years later Rainerius Sacconi writes that from Constantinople up to the Atlantic Ocean, there were 16 different heretic churches, all of which were named after their city or region. In his *Summa* which he wrote in 1250 as a handbook for the Inquisition he calls those sixteen by the name *Cathari*. And he mentions: “Forgive me, that I use the name of ‘churches’ but this is what they call them themselves”. He also mentions that after the fall of Montségur there would be no more than 4,000 *parfaits*. But the joyous event in St. Félix de Carman, now 850 years ago, is a moment of joy, of hope and encouragement. Dozens of sons of the noble families received the *consolamentum* of the living. In the front row sat young Esclarmonde de Foix, at that time 15 years old. It was the outpouring of a tremendous blessing, a huge impulse from the world of the Paraclete. From Nikètas, the patriarch of the seven churches of Asia and his strength, the confirmation was given to them that the realm of Love was a realistic, spiritual reality. Through him they inwardly perceive the original structures of this spiritual realm. Their souls were filled with courage and hope, and he encouraged them by connecting them to other apocryphal churches that existed in the world, the churches of Bulgaria, Dragovitsa, Melinguie and Dalmatia. And over his Occitan brothers and sisters he spreads the harmonic order of the kingdom-within, which is eternally preserved in the field of the Holy Spirit. ☼



'Cleanse me, my God, purify me inwardly and outwardly, purify body, soul and spirit so that the seeds of light may grow within me and make me into a flaming torch. May I be a flame to transform everything in and around me into Light.'

Bogomielengebed

© Photo: Year party at the main square in Sibioe, Transylvania. © Cain Stan, Shutterstock

"Give us today our supernatural bread"

CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX; DICK VAN NIEKERK



BOGOMILS AND CATHARS ON THE
KEY PHRASE OF THE OUR FATHER



In June 2006, I visited Paris for an interview with the Bulgarian filmmaker Maria Kolev, in her private cinema on the Boulevard Saint Michel. She had just completed three beautiful films about the Bogomils, and announced her new movie productions with the subtitle: "The Cathars are back in Paris 800 years later." She was most surprised by my arrival: an unknown Dutchman who had travelled to Paris by TGV to see a movie about the Bulgarian Bogomils, and to speak to the Bulgarian producer in France. Maria Koleva is the daughter of Nedialka Karaliova, who made a famous soundtrack about the Bogomils, which was broadcast in the dark sixties every Sunday afternoon by the Bulgarian state radio.

Warm and hospitable Mrs. Koleva – she is now 77 years old – could barely wait for my questions. She immediately began to discourse, giving a somewhat academic lecture about the Bogomils: "God-loving citizens of Christ who did not have any need for a church obsessed with self-esteem." She described the Bogomils as an independent gnostic movement of true Christians, who knew how to penetrate into all layers of Bulgarian and later also Byzantine society. A movement also that provided an example of freedom and personal responsibility for each individual, as well as freedom of thought and an

Praying woman, with sun, star and moon. Stèle in Brotnice, South Dalmatia



Origenes: 'Ask for the heaven and the earth will be given to you also'

absolute equality of man and woman. Although there are few concrete remnants of the Bogomil era (between 950 and 1450), she emphasized that the Bogomils still continue to live in the collective consciousness of the Bulgarians and that Bogomil thinking has nestled, among other things, in the highly developed thoughts of the Bulgarians on health and in their administration of justice. But Maria Koleva showed herself most impressed by the fearless attitude of the universally respected Bogomil parfaits, who “demonstrated every day that the true church of Christ resides in the heart of man.” According to her, the Cathars extended the Bogomil ideas, and were able to crown their understandings with even further refinement. “There were two fireplaces but one flame! Not for nothing, the Bogomils are called the Cathars of the East.” When I said goodbye at the beginning of the evening, Mrs. Koleva made a solemn prediction: “Listen, dear friend, within 10 years, Europe will discover that Europe, at least the spiritually free people of Europe, began in that small village of Saint Félix Lauragais in 1167. The first impulse was given for the freedom and independence of man, who no longer needed to be a grey, will-less cell in a feudal and repressive medieval society. It has cost lots of blood and tears to keep that message alive, but anyway: Saint Félix is at the cradle of Europe!” Therefore, it is a great honour for me on this very special day to speak about the immense influence that the Bogomils have had on the European spiritual culture, at this spot only meters away from

the place where papa Nicetas spoke to the Cathar leaders. Do not expect the story of a scientist, because that I am not. The only reason I have the courage to stand here before you is Love; many years of love for the Bogomils, love for Bulgaria and love for the Cathars.

Nicetas 850

First of all, I would like to pay tribute to today's silent protagonist: the spiritual leader, papa Nicetas of Constantinople. He is one of the most important figures in European history, but we hardly know anything about him. There has always been a mysterious haze hanging around this Nicetas or Niquinta. Many theories about his origins are around. He could, for example, be from the former Bulgarian capital, Preslav. Without wishing to increase the confusion about his identity, I would like to pose a few questions in this regard.

We know that he is from Constantinople, but that does not necessarily mean that he hailed from that city, because Constantinople was also the name of the entire Byzantine Empire at that time. Either way, from Constantinople and his fluent Greek, he may have been Greek. Is Nicetas a representative of the Bogomil Church of the City of Constantinople? Probably not: a Greek speaking dignitary and clergyman from the East who speaks Latin in the West – as we can figure out from the Charter of the Church Meeting in Saint Félix – would be almost unthinkable at that time. Is he not maybe a representative of the second Bogomil church, the Latin-speaking Cathar Church

of Constantinople? Concrete information about this dissident community of Latins is extremely scarce in the sources. Rain-erius Sacconi, the infamous Dominican hunter of heretics, noted about this Latin church that it had (in around 1250 ad) “barely fifty members”. This should be interpreted as meaning that it had fifty bonshommes. At first glance, not an impressive number, but in the research of Catharism, this number is usually multiplied by a factor of one hundred to estimate the approximate size of the whole community. Therefore: 5000 souls, and probably more.

It is undeniable that there was room for a western Catharian-type church in twelfth-century Byzantium. Constantinople was a multi-coloured, multi-ethnic society where, in 1181, more than 60,000 Western immigrants lived at the Golden Horn. They were mostly Italians, but there were also Venetians, Norwegians, Germans, English and French. The Greek-speaking citizens of Byzantium, the Romaioi, labeled them as “Latinoi”, or Latins. Those Latins were mainly scientific researchers, diplomats, priests, merchants, artists and pilgrims. They came to Byzantium via the famous ancient Roman road ‘Via Egnatia’, on which the city of Ohrid – in the current Macedonia, and located on the famous Ohrid Lake – was an important intermediate station. In this city, called ‘Lychnidos’ by the Romans, ‘City of Light’, the first ‘university’ of Europe was located, where one could openly discuss religion, including its dualistic aspects. Which is why Ohrid was called ‘the Jerusalem of the East’.

These travellers lived in Byzantium for a shorter or longer period and were welcome too. Emperor Manuel I Komnene, for example, pursued a politics of rapprochement with the West, especially the Italians, who might be very useful to him

in defending his empire which is why the Emperor made it so easy for them. Probably the first Bogomil-Cathar ‘recruitment activities’ in the West were performed by members of the aforementioned dissident church of the Latins. If they were Westerners who had lived in Byzantium for some considerable time, they would certainly not have had language problems in transmitting their Light message when they returned to Western Europe. The contact in Constantinople was crucial because there was a possibility for natural contact between the multilingual people. We can reasonably assume that Bogomilism was given a western tone and that the texts were here translated from Greek into Latin. Here, Catharism evolved from the Bogomilism and here the messengers were trained in transferring their teachings to the West. Westerners brought westerners the true faith. It seems very plausible that a representative of this church of “converters”, such as Nicetas, came with his message of Love and Peace to Saint Félix, to advise on the overall structure of the Southern French Cathar communities.

I deeply bow to Nicetas – for his initiative to cross the Alps in order to give the consolamentum to all those people in Occitan who had a deep desire for salvation and suffered severe trials. Thank you also, Nicetas, for bridging the gap, now 850 years ago, between east and west, and to connect the Bogomils through the golden thread of the gnosis to the Cathars.

Some thoughts about the Our Father

The Our Father was the chief prayer of the Bogomils. It is also iconic in their image to outsiders. It is furthermore the central prayer of the consolamentum (that is in Greek teleiosis), the ritual with which the pupil was connected to the Gnostic force-field, thus making him



or her a parfait. The exclusive use of the Our Father is unique for the Bogomils. They were the first to place it central in their teachings. They explicitly rejected all other prayers and hymns, as they were a form of word abuse for them, an endless babbling: 'monogoglagolanja!' The Bogomils made an ironic comparison: they, as true Christians, built their house on the rock of the Our Father, while the Orthodox church was built on the sand of all kinds of diverse prayers. The Our Father was also for them a specific holy prayer, according to one of their few preserved texts, the *Interrogatio Johanni*: "The seven heavens are inhabited by angels whose task it is to convey the glory of the

Image of Innocent III who excommunicates the Albigensians (left) and the beginning of the crusade against them (right). From the manuscript *Les Grandes chroniques de France* by Mahiet and the master of the Cambrai Missal, c. 1340. British Library, London



Father through the Our Father.” We thus find that the Bogomils are worthy to be called the first ones who used the Our Father as the exclusive foundation of their teachings. In doing so, they proudly defied the established church. In the eyes of the church writers of those days they had to be prosecuted as heretics for this reason alone.

Epiouision or supersubstantialem

For the sake of clarity: the first three petitions of the Our Father are as follows: Your name will be sanctified, Your Kingdom will come, and Your will be done in heaven as

Peter Deunov: 'Feed our souls with Your Heavenly Bread and strengthen us with Your strength so that we can progress on our spiritual path.'

well as on earth. The fourth petition is: give us our daily (or imperishable) bread. In this fourth petition, the Bogomils used a very special word: the Greek *epiousion* or the Latin *supersubstantialem*.

This word *epiousion* was never used in the Greek language before the Bible was put together. It is a *hapax legomenon*, a word invention; we would call it now a neologism. It was the alert and witty church father Origenes (185-254) who was the first to mention it. Whoever invents a new word puts out a special alert to his readers: be aware, something is not common use here! This word is: *epiousion*, consisting of the prefix *epi* and the noun *ousia*. *Epi* means upon or above. And *ousia* means entity, essence or substance. Here comes language expert and Bible translator Hieronymus (347-420), to elucidate us. He recognized the word as unique, and, in an inventive way, translates it into Latin also as a neologism: *supersubstantialem*. And then comes the following phrase, used first by the Bogomils, and later by the Cathars: *Panem nostrum supersubstantialem da nobis hodie*, 'give us this day our super-substantial bread'.

What does this 'new' word *supersubstantialem* mean? Substance or Substanz (German) now usually means 'real physical matter with a tangible solid presence'. But the original meaning was exactly the opposite!

Composed of *sub* (below) and *stare* (standing, lying), *substantia* meant the core of a thing hidden under the visible, physical surface. Aristotle has explained the term

ousia, the noun in our word *epiousion* as 'the inner reality of being'. Simply put, the word 'substance' originally meant the essential, or the essence of a thing. In line with this, Hieronymus translates *substantia* as 'the sheltering beneath the surface', or the 'hidden inner essence of a thing'. What kind of something is this 'substance' or 'self-existing essence'? With the well-known expression *substantifique moelle* of the French philosopher Rabelais (1483-1553), we possibly have an even clearer definition. Translated, it means 'the true substance', or 'the very substance'. So the word 'epiousion' could mean the primal substance, the nutritious core, the quintessence.

That is what the Bogomils prayed for in the Our Father: for the quintessence of their lives. Catharose de Petri, one of the grandmasters of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, would call the quintessence later the "fifth base element", the access to the field of immortal souls.

Using the word *epiousion* or *supersubstantialem*, the Bogomils had a lot of influence. The English forerunner of the reformation John Wycliffe (1330-1384) used it: 'gyue to us this dai oure breed ouer othir substaunce', which means 'give to us this day our bread (which is) over all other substance'. Also, the impressive Czech pioneer of the Reformation, Jan Hus (1370-1415) speaks of "the bread of holy teachings of God's word" (*chleb svatého naučení slova božieho*). Intentionally or not, Wycliffe and Hus later each had a profound influence on the Reformation.

This year, hundreds of thousands of believers in Europe remembered 500 years of Martin Luther, 500 years of Reformation (1517-2017). There are large, regular events, especially in Germany. However, here on this special day in Saint Félix Lauragais, we give the only right and just rendering. Today, you and I together celebrate 850 years of inner reformation!

Love

The Cathars also gave an exclusive meaning to the Our Father. They also assigned no value to other prayers or hymns. For the Cathars – in accordance with the Bogomils – the Our Father is a unique prayer with great magic power. According to some sources, they prayed it fifteen times a day. It is striking to note that they believed that it may only be prayed by those with a spiritual task, and also only in Latin. And as with the Bogomils, for the Cathars the Our Father is the leading prayer of the sacrament of the Consolamentum.

So what did they do with the fourth petition? The Cathars took the Bogomilic explanation of the sentence to another level, to that of an aemulatio or holy imitation. Fortunately, we have a lot of Catharic rituals from which we can figure it out. The ritual of Firenze, for example, states the following: “Panem substantem is the supernatural bread, the law of Christ coming from heaven and giving life to the world. Concise and True: It is Love with Capital Letters – Agape.”

From a fragment of “The Dublin Rituals” we touch the heart of the matter in its words:

“Christ also learns to ask for another bread (pain supersubstantile – epiou-sion), that is, the transubstantive Love, the Love through which all substances are supported and connected. Love is

called supersubstantiality for the reason that it goes beyond all substances, such as compassion, spirit, life, soul, heart, body, faith, hope. The power of Love holds together all compound substances and connects them.”

From this heart-warming Cathar explanation, it is clear that they are equally inspired by important early Christian gnostic thinkers like Valentine, Origen (mentioned above), and the mystical theologian Dionysius the Areopagite.

Based on the prayer that Jesus himself taught us, the Cathars make it clear to us that the remarkably unique word epiou-sion – supersubstantialem holds perhaps the most important concept of the New Testament. It is the silent driving engine for inner, undogmatic Christianity, without the intervention of institutions or priests. It is the only necessary food, it is the quintessence for a person developing his spiritually, to meet the divine within

QUINTESSENCE

The candidate must make the decision that he may not apply any of the old habits and methods in the new life-state. From his outlook he turns to the new living present and his future in it, and in the hour of victory he takes his new weapons and takes advantage of his new possibilities.

What are they? He abides in the life-stream of the Great Universal Waters. That is: a new magical fire touches him, pervades him and sets up its abode in him. “The Voice of the Great Waters” sings in him with the five Proto-Sounds; they become one. And from that he takes the quintessence. In music, it is the fifth tone from the key-note; and in magic, the finest, the noblest, and the mightiest of this great power that has become his. So he steps forward as a servant in the great mansion of the divine intervention to fulfil the tasks before him in the harvest field. It is a core-power with which he may bring harmony, peace and tranquillity everywhere, even into the depths of hell: the peace of Bethlehem.

Whoever may use, whoever can use, that power no longer needs to do battle as all strife arises from the hostility between the twin-powers of dialectic nature. He who no longer lives by those twin-powers overcomes strife and is a bringer of peace on earth for all men who live in darkness.

Taken from Jan van Rijckenborgh, *The Nuctemeron of Apollonius of Tyana*, Haarlem 1992

DAILY OR SUPERNATURAL BREAD

An example of the discussion about the use of supersubstantialem or epiousion in the Our Father is found in a document from the period between 1131-1140. It is a confrontation between the mystic Bernard of Clairvaux, very faithful to the Roman church, and Peter Abélard, the original and independent thinker, later condemned by the church, whom Bernard considers to be in sympathy with the Cathars.

Rome had been very observant of what was happening in the French monastery of Paraclet, where Abélard's ex-love, Héloïse, was abbess. Bernardus came to visit for a "long-expected" critical inspection. While praying the Our Father, Bernard was disturbed that the Paraclet's nuns did not pray "give us our daily bread," as 'is usual in the Latin Church', but replaced cotidianum with supersubstantialem, which is considered "more theological."

When Abélard, through Héloïse, learned that the Abbot of Clairvaux was angry about this, he immediately sent him a sharp letter, in which he accounted for the use of supersubstantialem, pointing out that the Matthew version deserves preference over Luke's version (who uses 'cotidianum'), because the former learned the prayer from Jesus himself, while the latter had only heard Paul, who was a student of the apostles. He also found 'supersubstantialem' a much better translation than 'cotidianem'. He then denounced the new Cistercians, of whom Bernardus was at that time the primary reformer. Abélard points out all sorts of innovations which the Cistercians were making, and which he found "ridiculous", and that these were much worse than that one word which Bernardus took exception to.

Bernard never responded specifically to the incident. But from his works it is clear that he followed Roman righteousness as strictly as possible. In other letters he responded haughtily to the role of Abélard. He found Abélard "plus novitatis curiosus quam studiosus veritatis", that is, someone who fears above all else to think like the others and to repeat what they have said, and consequently cannot keep up with his own feelings and dissertations. Inadvertently and implicitly, the mystic makes it clear how suffocating the medieval society must have been for anyone who showed just a grain of individuality and self-development.

himself or herself and to receive energy from the divine world – yes, to be permanently part of the Gnosis.

Allow me to conclude with three remarks.

1. It is amazing how many church authorities had problems with this particular word epiousion. (see box). If you used the word in the Middle Ages, in some areas you were even treated as a heretic. Since the church father Origen pronounced his description of "supernatural" in the third century, the use of that word in the Our Father has been considered heretical. This is the whole period from Origenes to Wycliffe. The choice to use the word

'cotidianum', 'daily', was a way to avoid association with 'heretics' or free thinkers.

2. It is shocking how many people are deceived by the fourth petition in the Our Father, and only maintain a literal, material interpretation: that is, 'our daily bread'. Jan van Rijckenborgh, grandmaster of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum, warns his audience in a somewhat ironic way: "Pray only for spiritual support of your soul. Do not think that you can pray in order that you may soon have a reliable help in your household!"
3. What is the underlying reason that the established church did not accept the word epiousion-substantialem?



I think this it is a matter of divergent teachings, of taking different positions and especially of incompatible visions of God and humans. On the one hand, you have the approach of the free person who is capable of perfection, yes, of becoming a 'Perfect', and to develop on the spiritual path so as to participate in the Gnosis, and thus to testify from It. Such a striving man has no need of priests or institutes; rather he may seek fellow travellers on his way. On the other hand, the theology of the established churches speaks of a God "descending" from on high, who comes to save a passive human being living in 'sin'.

Dear audience, are we not here confronted by the essential difference between exoteric and esoteric Christianity? Was it not for this inner free Christianity, that broke through all the suffocating dogmatics, that Nicetas came here to Saint Félix? Did he not bear a luminous Christianity, full of élan, which the Cathars would shape with so much imagination? Indeed! Nicetas showed us the path of Light and Love, the path of inner reformation, self-liberation and self-transformation. He brought us endless inspiration for a New Era! ★

Castle Queribus near Cucugnan in the department Aude was after the fall of Montségur the last refuge for the hunted Occitan knights and Cathars. The castle fell in 1255

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff..

Awakening in the Holy Spirit



This talk will look briefly at how the esoteric stream of Gnostic Christianity, Alchemy and Kabbalah kept alive through European civilization the ancient cosmology of the Divine Feminine which was slowly to disappear over the dark centuries of the Christian era. It will show how Gnosticism and the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit, whose presiding image was Sophia or Divine Wisdom as well as the cup of the Holy Grail, grew out of the original Essene or Nazarene teachings of Jesus and Mary Magdalene whose apostolic work spread throughout Provence from AD 44 and resurfaced in the twelfth century in the Languedoc.

A thousand years ago, a monk called Joachim of Flora living in southern Italy prophesied the coming of the Age of the Holy Spirit. Has the time come to enter this Age and call upon the Holy Spirit to guide us? This is perhaps the most crucial time in our history: a time of the utmost depravity and barbarism but also a time of tremendous opportunity for change. Millions across the planet are awakening to the need to create a more enlightened kind of civilization: one based on love, service and relationship rather than the pursuit of power and the old pattern of national rivalry, weapons and war. This awakening requires a radical transformation of human consciousness where a different understanding of reality comes into being, bringing with it different val-

ues which profoundly respect all forms of planetary life.

Where are we to look for the origin of the idea of the Holy Spirit? First of all, we need to look back to the Neolithic era when the cosmos was imagined as a Great Mother, whose three domains were the sky, the earth and the waters beneath the earth — from whose womb all life emerged. The most important idea I want to convey to you about this time is that *there was no creator beyond creation*: no separation between the Great Mother as Source and the manifest forms of her life; no separation between Spirit and Nature. The whole of the natural world and the cosmos itself was alive and ensouled, part of a living web of relationships, animated and sustained by invisible spirit. People felt they lived within a Sacred Order, the Order of the Great Mother.¹

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CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX:
ANNE BARING

We can follow the transition from the Great Mother of the Neolithic era into the Great Goddesses of the Bronze Age: Goddesses such as Isis of Egypt, Artemis of Ephesus and Cybele of Anatolia whose worship endured far into the Roman era. These Great Goddesses were worshipped as the source of life: one life manifesting as the life of each and all. Sexuality was seen as the vital expression of that life: a sacred, ecstatic experience associated with life's own creative impulse eternally to renew itself. In the temple courtyards of the Goddess stood the tree of life – the sycamore and the olive. The dove and the serpent were from earliest times associated with her worship. Also associated with these Great Goddesses was the image of the rose because of the observation by astronomers of the exquisite rose petal pattern created by the eight-year orbit of the planet Venus. For many thousands of years the Great Mother and these Great Goddesses personified the principle of relationship: the interconnectedness of every aspect of life and, above all, the sacredness of this great Web of Life. I think we can look to them for the origin of the feminine concept of the Holy Spirit as an all-embracing cosmic entity in whose life we live.²

Carrying forward these ideas to later Greek culture, we find in Plato's *Timaeus* his influential concept of the Soul of the Cosmos, which he describes as a "Single Living Creature that encompasses all living creatures that are within it." This idea was to re-appear in the third century AD as Plotinus's concept of the *Anima-Mundi* or Soul of the World. Turning to another culture – that of Judaism – we find the most sublime evocation of the Holy Spirit in the Book of Proverbs where Wisdom tells us that she is the Beloved of God, with Him from the beginning, before the foundation of the world. (Proverbs 8:23-31) She speaks from the deep ground of life as the hidden law which orders it and as the craftswoman of creation. The later Books of Ben Sirach and

The deceased with the arms
crossed over the chest. Stèle
Opravdici, East Bosnia





Western Alexandria with a part of the port. At the extreme point of the peninsula the Pharos or the light beacon. (From the atlas *Civitates orbis terrarum* by Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg which appeared in six volumes from 1572-1617)

Many Jews fled to the Greek city of Alexandria, taking with them their ancient temple traditions from the Goddess Asherah, the Queen of Heaven

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the Wisdom of Solomon in the *Apocrypha* describe this feminine Presence –who is named as Divine Wisdom and Holy Spirit – as the intelligence of the cosmos, rooted in tree, vine, earth and water and active in the habitations of man. She is the principal of justice that inspires human laws. She is invisible spirit guiding human consciousness, calling out to the world for recognition. (Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sirach 24:3-6, 9-11, 13-21, 28-34; Wisdom of Solomon 6:12-15)

To those who, like Solomon, prized her more highly than rubies, Divine Wisdom (Hokhmah in Hebrew and Sophia in Greek), the Holy Spirit was their wise and luminous guide, associated with the image of Light. In Solomon's words: "I prayed and understanding was given me: I called upon God, and the Spirit of Wisdom came to me... I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light, for the light that cometh from her never goeth out..." (Wisdom of Solomon 7:7, 10, 21-7, 29; 8:1-2)

With their vivid imagery, these passages transform the Holy Spirit, speaking as Divine Wisdom, from abstract idea into living presence. She speaks as if she were here, in this world, dwelling with us in the midst of her kingdom, accessible to those who seek her out. She is unknown and unrecognized, yet working within the depths of life, striving to open our understanding to the divine reality of her being, the sacredness of her creation, and her justice, wisdom, love and truth.

In 587 BC at the time of the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem a large element of the Jewish population was removed to Babylon. But many other Jews fled to the Greek city of Alexandria, taking with them their First Temple traditions of the Goddess Asherah, the

Queen of Heaven, whom they worshipped as the Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom. Once again, this time in the Greek world, we find the association of the Goddess with Wisdom and the Holy Spirit. After the destruction of the Second Temple in AD 70 by the Romans many more Jews joined this established community in Alexandria. These Jewish exiles formed the core of the later Gnostic groups of the second and third centuries AD that had assimilated the revolutionary message of Jesus and his Nazarene followers and had kept the image of a feminine aspect of Deity.

The essential message of Jesus, originating in the Essene community of Qumrâm in Palestine, was about opening our awareness to the presence of an inner realm that he called the kingdom of God. The light of the Holy Spirit was the pearl of great price that was present within each of us but it needed to be called forth into our awareness so that we lived life in a different way, in compassionate service of others rather than living in servitude to the debased values and beliefs that governed the world of that time and still govern it in the world of our time. In the Nazarene communities, women as well as men could be teachers, priests and healers since all carried the divinity of the Holy Spirit within them. The later Gnostic Communities like the earlier Nazarene ones did not organize themselves on a hierarchical model like the Church of Rome and did not accept the legitimacy of the apostolic descent of that Church from Peter.

- They took their teaching and apostolic descent, not from Peter but from the Nazarene teaching of Jesus and his brother James.

- They celebrated God as both Mother and Father.
- They treated men and women as equals. Either could hold the position of teacher, healer, priest and deacon.
- They did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God or that he was immaculately conceived or that he had been resurrected from the dead in a physical body.

This put them in direct opposition to the developing Church in Rome. Jesus was seen as a visionary teacher of the path to enlightenment and union with the divine ground, much like the eastern teachers of Buddhism and Hinduism. These Gnostic groups gradually spread westwards into Europe and eastwards into India and as far as China. Although there is a time lapse of several hundred years, their teaching may have been transmitted from generation to generation until it reached the Bogomils of Bulgaria and the later Cathars in France and Italy since their beliefs are so similar. The teaching of St. Francis in the thirteenth century Italy is essentially the same as the Nazarene teaching of Jesus.

Many of these Gnostic groups kept alive the ancient idea of a Feminine aspect of the Divine. Until 1945 when the Gnostic texts were discovered at Nag Hammadi in Egypt no-one knew that some groups of early Christians had an image of the Divine Mother whom they named "The Invisible within the All." The Divine Mother was identified with the Holy Spirit and the dove was seen as her emissary. Some believed that, at the baptism of Jesus, it was the Divine Mother, the Holy Spirit, who spoke to Jesus, saying "This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."³

In a Gnostic text called *The Trimorphic Pro-*

tennoia, the speaker describes herself as the intangible Womb that gives shape to the All, the life that moves in every creature.⁴

However, by the late fourth century every one of the secret texts which the Gnostic groups revered was branded as heretical by those who called themselves orthodox Christians. Because of this, all the feminine imagery of the Divine was eradicated from Christianity. This is what happened.

At the crucial Council of Nicaea, summoned by the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD Jesus was declared to be the only Son of God, 'of one substance with God' (*homoousious*) rather than 'like unto God' (*homoiousious*). Naming him the Son of God meant that he had to be immaculately conceived, free of the taint of original sin, as well as celibate. This was later ratified at the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD when the Virgin Mary was declared *Theotokos* or God-Bearer and Jesus was declared to have been conceived immaculately by the Holy Ghost. At these Councils all traces of his brothers and sisters and also of his marriage were erased.

At the same Council of Nicaea Christianity lost the ancient feminine imagery of the Holy Spirit in the new formulation of a male Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Divine Wisdom was dissociated from the Holy Spirit and assimilated to the figure of Christ as Logos. Some fifty years later, in 381 AD, the Emperor Theodosius declared that anyone who did not comply with his edict that all must believe in the Apostolic Creed defined at Nicaea that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were of one and the same substance would be declared a heretic. It was at this time that the idea entered

Image of The Battle of Yarmouk (636) against the Saracens. In *History of the Tartars*, a Catalan manuscript from the beginning of the fourteenth century.



Almost all female images of the divine have been eradicated from Christianity

Christian teaching that hell and eternal punishment awaited heretics and unbelievers, laying the ground for persecution in centuries to come. The many Gnostic Gospels were destroyed; all meetings and rituals were forbidden under pain of death. Some of these Gospels, hidden at the time of this edict, were recovered in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, including the Gospels of Philip, Thomas and Mary. Most were lost forever.

As the Christian Church became more and more fused with the Roman model of Imperial power and more and more identified with the persecution of heresy,

the Gnostic beliefs and practices and the feminine image of the Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom had to go underground for many centuries.

These beliefs and practices emerged 800 years later in the twelfth century Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit as well as in the parallel and very similar tradition of Kabbalah in the Jewish communities in Spain and south-western France, a mystical tradition wonderfully named as the “Voice of the Dove”. It is interesting that the earlier imagery in the Biblical Wisdom texts of the Queen of Heaven as Holy Spirit and Divine Wisdom re-appears in Kabbalah as the Shekinah, the

feminine aspect of the god-head. The Shekinah as the Holy Spirit, active and present in this world, supplies the missing imagery of divine immanence, sanctifying the whole of the phenomenal world: an idea which was lost or deliberately eliminated by the three patriarchal religions.

We also find in this mystical Jewish tradition the indissoluble union or sacred marriage of the feminine and masculine aspects of Deity which is also tragically absent from the patriarchal religions. The great centres for the study of Kabbalah in Medieval Europe were Toledo and Girona in Spain, Narbonne and Toulouse in the Languedoc and Troyes in Champagne. Troyes was the city where the Order of the Knights Templar was founded by St. Bernard in 1128.

Now, I need to go back a thousand years in this complex story of the Holy Spirit to the role of Mary Magdalene, the Apostle who brought the Nazarene message of the divine element hidden within human nature to France. Mary Magdalene is the missing link in this story. In AD 44 she had to flee Palestine and sailed to Marseilles, landing, so the legend says, at Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer or, as is more likely, further along the coast at the port of Narbonne (Narbo Martius).⁵ Mary Magdalene was the consort of Jesus and took with her to France their daughter and son, born in AD 33 and AD 37. She was pregnant with her third child and second son when they arrived in France and gave birth to him there, naming him Josephes. Lazarus and the Apostle Philip are believed to have sailed with her, also her sister Martha, and Mary Salome, Jesus' sister, who was married to Lazarus. It is highly likely that Mary Magdalene, Philip and Lazarus took with



Image of Mary Magdalene from 1506, Florence

them to France precious texts relating to the teachings she and Jesus shared with a close group of disciples.⁶

Lazarus became the first bishop of Marseilles. Martha was buried in Tarascon. Mary Magdalene taught for nearly 20 years in Provence and the Languedoc and was widely known and adored in this part of France. Towards the end of her life she is said to have withdrawn to a cave on the Ste. Baume mountain in Provence and was buried by Lazarus in a chapel at the foot of it when she died age 60 in 63 AD. This chapel, later a Basilica, was probably the most sacred and venerated place in France in the so-called Dark Ages, only rivalled much later, by Vézelay and Chartres.

In 1059 a church was dedicated to Mary

In the twelfth century many troubadours were initiates in the church of the holy spirit

Magdalene in the town of Rennes-le-Chateau in the Languedoc. There is a village called Les Labadous, near Rennes-le-Chateau where she is believed to have lived. There are many local legends about her. There was an Essene community there. Her memory was honoured by the Knights Templar who knew the true story of her marriage to Jesus and built the great cathedrals in her honour although, in the orthodox tradition, they are dedicated to the Virgin Mary. To the Templars, Mary Magdalene was 'Notre Dame'. They identified her with Divine Wisdom (Sophia).

Now I can come to the last phase of this extraordinary story and to the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit, whose presiding image was Divine Wisdom (Sophia) and which recovered the original Nazarene message of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Like the Bogomils of Bulgaria, the Cathars claimed that their teaching was descended directly from that of the Apostles and the early Church. They spoke of their Church as "The Cup that gives out manna" and "The Precious Stone". It is impossible not to connect these images with the Grail and indeed the twelfth century Quest for the Holy Grail was a deliberate attempt to recover and restore the lost feminine image of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Grail was the disguised symbol of the Church of the Holy Spirit. At the beginning of the twelfth century, no-one had heard of the Grail; by the end of it, there was no-one in Europe who had not heard of

it. This secret teaching was woven into the many Grail legends and carried all over Europe by the troubadours, many of whom were initiates of the Church of the Holy Spirit. From early in the ninth century, they had received their training at St. Guilhem-le-Desert, near Montpellier. The dove was a primary symbol of the Church of the Holy Spirit and the troubadours in their forest meetings wore red cloaks embroidered with the image of the dove. But the dove was also the symbol of the Jewish mystical tradition of Kabbalah, known as "The Voice of the Dove".

850 years ago in 1167 an extraordinary event took place in this town: a synod was convened to plan the strategy for supplanting the Catholic Church in the Languedoc with the 'true Christianity' – the Cathar Church of the Holy Spirit. By the second half of the twelfth century it had virtually displaced the Church of Rome as the recognized vehicle of the Christian revelation in this area. It claimed to be nothing less than the true Church of Christ, handed down in unbroken succession from the Apostles and retaining the power, which the false Church of Rome had lost or never possessed, of 'baptising with the Holy Spirit and with fire.'

The Cathars believed the world was imperfect because of human enslavement to the power of the Demiurge, not because of original sin. They believed the Catholic Church had withheld from men



Castle and seal of Rennes-le-Chateau

and women the knowledge of themselves as repositories of the hidden light of the Holy Spirit and barred their access to the true teaching of Christ.

Where the Catholic Church taught that the Redeemer is outside us and our ultimate redemption as Christians has been assured by Christ's sacrificial death, the Cathar Church taught that man can become the redeemer or awakener of the divine spirit hidden within his soul. This gave great significance to the individual since the divine drama of redemption was consummated in and through him, not through the sacrifice of Christ. Catharism, like Gnosticism, taught a sacred rite of unification, an *opus divinum*, which ultimately awakened a man or woman to their indwelling divinity. This was identical to the later Great Work of Alchemy and to the original Nazarene teaching of Jesus.

"Against this stupendous claim and the

success of its ministers, the Catholic Church found itself obliged to mobilize all its resources, finally raising against it a Crusade which was pursued more relentlessly than any against the Saracen infidel, and then creating an Inquisition to hunt down Cathars to the last man, never resting till it was satisfied that the last of them had been exterminated." ⁷

One of the most revolutionary elements in this Church was that the Cathars were the first group since the Gnostics in the third century to ordain women as well as men as bishops, arch-deacons and priests. They did not believe that the sexual act transmitted original sin but that it was a sacred union of two equal beings. They took a vow of celibacy once they had received the rite of the *Consolamentum* and been ordained as *Perfecti*. The texts they held in the highest regard were an expanded version of the Gospel of John and *The Apocryphon of John*

or *Secret Book of John* found at Nag Ham-madi in 1945. They also had two others called *The Book of Love*, believed to have been written by Mary Magdalene, that was treasured by the Knights Templar and another called *The Secret Supper* which may have contained the sacrament of the *Consolamentum*. No trace remains of the last two whose existence was revealed to the Inquisitors when they tortured the unfortunate people who fell into their hands. These books would surely have been the treasured possession of the libraries of the Cathar nobles in Foix, Carcassonne and Toulouse that were seized by the Inquisition.⁸ They also had texts of the Greek philosophers. These texts had been taken from Athens to Persia in the sixth century when the Platonic Academy was closed down. When the Arabs conquered Persia in the seventh century they preserved them, taking them ultimately to Toledo after their conquest of Spain. There they were translated from Greek into Latin and taken into France and Italy in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.⁹ They might also have had the Gnostic writings of Valentinus and Basilides. It is more than likely that they had several of the Gnostic Gospels, copies of which had been secretly preserved through the centuries. The Cathar priests and Perfects carried with them a copy of the Gospel of John on their journeys through the villages of the Languedoc.

The Cathars were skilled in the art of printing and they translated these texts as well as some parts of the New Testament into the language of the Languedoc so the people they taught to read could gain access to them. This was one of their most remarkable achievements, unheard of in the Europe of their time. They emphasised brotherhood,

compassion, loving service of the poor. They taught the people not to fear death and to trust in the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit. They had an extensive knowledge of herbs used for healing and were consummate observers of the stars. They saw all human souls as fallen angels imprisoned within the body. At death they were released to return to their true home. Hence they said that at death "they took the Way to the Stars". The Cathar Church and the brilliant culture of the Languedoc were utterly destroyed in the thirteenth century by the infamous Albigensian Crusade and the Inquisition: a prime example of genocide. Although the Church of the Holy Spirit was eradicated, enlightened individuals drawn from different European countries and from a Jewish as well as a Christian background, managed to keep it alive. This underground stream of secret esoteric teaching, originating in the crucible of Hellenistic Alexandria with the exiled Gnostic communities there, was transmitted in the elaborate code of symbols known to Hermeticists and Alchemists as well as in the practice of Kabbalah, whose devotees were both Jewish and Christian. We owe an enormous debt to the courageous souls who kept these traditions alive in the face of horrendous persecution.

Bringing this story into the present time, how can we understand the Holy Spirit today? The New Story emerging in quantum physics is that the whole universe is a unified field. We live within a cosmic web of life which underlies and connects all life forms in the universe and on our planet. Every atom of life interacts with every other atom, no matter how distant. We are not only connected through the Internet but through the infinitesimal particles of sub-atomic

matter. We are part of an immense Field or Network of Consciousness which sustains not only our world, but the entire Cosmos. A new cosmology is being born; a new vision of our profound relationship with an intelligent, living and interconnected universe. The realization is dawning that we are participating in a Cosmic Consciousness or Intelligence which is present in every particle of our being and every particle of matter. We are all individual expressions of a single Cosmic Organism. Spirit or God is not something transcendent to us. We are part of it, at the very heart of it. This is one of the great revelations of our time. The Old Order has been based on the principle of power. The new one will be based on the principle of relationship. The time of transition from an old paradigm to a new one is challenging and dangerous because the old one is so deeply established in the collective psyche and in the governments of nations and their unconscious political leaders. Yet there is great hope for a different future carried in the hearts of those who are working to establish the new vision and raise our level of consciousness to a more enlightened level. This time, it will not be eradicated.

Awakening in the Holy Spirit means embracing a new image of Spirit that includes Nature and all planetary life. It means recovering a very ancient understanding that the Cosmos has a Soul and an Intelligence and that Divine Spirit is immanent or present in every particle of matter: every stone, flower, tree and blade of grass. We are all engaged in a profound process of transformation that is manifesting as a new planetary consciousness which recognizes that we are

part of a Sacred Web of Life, a Web of Life that might be called both Holy Spirit and Holy Grail. If we could hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and listen to her Wisdom we would awaken to the sacredness and divinity of life. We would begin to see matter and our bodies in a different light. We would treat them with greater respect. Once, long ago, the world was experienced as alive with Spirit. Nature was part of a sacred cosmic whole. We need urgently to recover that vision if we are to respond to the challenge of this crucial time of choice and heal our neglected soul, our culture and our raped and vandalised planet. Ours is a time of immense responsibility and also a wonderful time to be alive. ★

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'The world is multidimensional. The new vision is a holistic one that understands the power of intention and the power of co-operation, of mutuality, of trust, of seeing the world as one. That vision then becomes our outer reality. Ours is the ability, through our consciousness, to create peace, to create love. The organ of transformation is the human heart because there is nothing – no weapon ever made – that is more powerful than a human heart.'

Dennis Kucinich

The annual festival 'Meadows in the Mountains' in the Rhodope Mountains of Bulgaria is the latest sequel to the festivals of Glastonbury and Burning Man; a gathering of young people who express themselves artistically and creatively, making music and listening and being at one with nature.

© Meadows in the Mountains, Rhodopes Mountains, Bulgaria

The ideal of brotherhood, the essence of the gospel of the Cathars

CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX:
EDUARD BERGA



The feudal community, the second of three classes in *The regime of the Princes*. Gilles de Rome, early fifteenth century.



The ecclesiastical council of Saint Félix de Caramàn which took place there 850 years ago signified a turning point in the history of Catharism. It stood for a new Europe, founded on the symbolic union of the Seven Churches of Asia. In the Declaration of Niquita (also rendered as Niquinta – Nikètas – Nicetas) we read: 'They (the seven churches) agreed 'that no one would do unto another what he would not have done to himself'.¹

N

Much research has been done with regard to this Council. There is only one document that acknowledges it but some historians believe that it could have been falsified, either in the 13th century by editors who wanted to provide a reason for the inexplicable influence of this terrible heresy in the Western world, or in 1660 by Guillaume Besse who forged a 'copy' of the document.²

I shall not enter into this discussion. I would rather discuss a certain part of this document which shows us society in those times, straight from its first words:

*'In the year 1167 of the Incarnation of the Lord, in the month of May, in these days the Church of Toulouse brought Father Niquita to the castrum of Saint-Félix, as well as a great host of men and women of the Church of Toulouse and of adjacent churches who came together to receive the Consolamentum.'*³

This 'great host of men and women' shows us a rather more joyful gathering of a popular religious group than the pomp and circumstance of

Female figure. Stèle at Zijemlje Polje in East Herzegovina



the Councils of Rome. Furthermore, this group consists of women as well as men, both from Toulouse and from further away in the region.

What we encounter here is the Occitan tradition of 'paratge', the total equality between people of all walks of life. It is in this concept that we recognize one of the pillars of European social thinking. It embodies the idea of the 'burgher' in medieval Gaul as opposed to the liegeman or vassal which were characteristic of the absolute monarchy. And the document adds: '...and came together to receive the Consolamentum'. I would like to go deeper into the concept of the Consolamentum in order to better understand the essential elements of Catharism and its evangelical ideal.

The Consolamentum

One of the characteristics of Catharism was the rejection of the sacraments of the Gregorian church. These sacraments were gradually introduced to formalise a human behavioural code within the structure of the church hierarchy.

In this way, the Roman church ruled its members directly from their birth until the final extreme unction before death. The sacraments represent submission to the dogmas that were ordained by the church hierarchy. A refusal to comply with the Catholic sacraments resulted in an excommunication by the church which was also followed by the powerful lords and kings. This excommunication made someone an 'apostat' and completely excluded him from the society of which he formerly was a recognized member.

To the Cathars, a sacrament meant something completely different. To them it was a direct connection with original Christianity. They only recognized the sacrament that Jesus administered to his apostles:

> *Aquest Sanh bapisme, per loqual
Sant Esperit es datz, a tengut la gleisa
de Deu dels apostols en sa, et es ven-
gutz de bos homes en bos homes entro
aici, e o fara entro la fi del segle*.⁴

> *Quar aqui on so doi o trei ajustat
el meu nom, eu so aqui e meg de lor*.⁸

the baptism of fire, which is receiving the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. This they called the Consolamentum.

As we may read in the Occitan Ritual of Lyon: 'This holy baptism, bestowed by the Holy Spirit, the Church of God, has been kept alive from the time of the apostles unto this day. It has been passed on from 'bons hommes' to 'bons hommes' until this day and will be observed until the end of the world'.⁵

Catharism ignited an impulse to rejuvenate and preserve original Christianity in the sense of community, of brotherhood. This brotherhood of humanity was born on the day of Pentecost when the apostles received the Holy Spirit as a holy spiritual Force. The canons of Orléans refer to this spiritual force when in 1022 they profess: 'We embrace the law which was written by the Holy Spirit within humans and we know only what we have learned from God, the Creator of all things.' (6) This refers to the same 'inner man' which inquisitor Bernard Gui ridiculed in scornful terms when he confirmed that the Cathars believed '...that there are both different spiritual bodies as well as one inner man.'

Because of the descent of the Holy Spirit, all the doctrines of Christianity are transformed into a living force that is an individual possession while at the same time this force may be shared by each and every one in the Christian collective. As the manuscript of Lyon states:

'For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.'

With these words Christianity lays the foundation for a brotherly community by setting the example of a universal unity to which all men are called.

On this corner stone the Church of God, Gleisa in the Occitan language, was built. Not as a hierarchical structure with

strong dogmatic rules but ‘as an assembly of faithful and holy men’ as we may read in the Cathar manuscript of Dublin.⁹

The Cathars were fully conscious of the fundamental unity which unites all human beings and they developed their teachings on this fundamental thesis. They summarized this doctrine with the sentence: ‘the Way which may lead you to the universal human brotherhood.’

We also recognize the essence of this doctrine in the Cathar ritual of the Consolamentum, written down in the Occitan language which was at that time the language of the region. This ritual has been preserved in Lyon. It describes the process of initiation that every human being has to undergo if he wants to reach the degree of perfection of the true Christ.

This process consists of 3 stages.

In the first stage the candidate becomes conscious that there are two natures within him: the worldly personality and a spiritual being. The ritual starts with the words:

We have come here for God and for you and for the Order of the Holy Church to give service and do penance and ask forgiveness for the sins that we have done, and for sinful things we have said or thought or done from our birth unto this day. We beg God’s mercifulness as well as yours so that you will pray to the holy Father for compassion and that you will forgive us.¹¹

This phase of service, *servisi* in Occitan, is regarded as a phase of cleansing and forgiveness for deficiencies and mistakes. But in a deeper sense it can be regarded as the phase of the recognition of the spiritual essence that lies hidden within the heart of every human. As the Occitan ritual says:

O Lord, judge and condemn the vices of the flesh. Have no pity on the flesh that was born in corruption but have pity on the spirit that lies imprisoned.¹²



Castle of Saint-Félix de Lauragais
© Charles Peytavie

< Nos em vengut denant Deu, e denant vos, e denant l’azordament de santa gleisa, per recebre servisi, e perdo, e penedensia, de tuit li nostre pecat, li qual avem fait ni dig, ni pessatz, ni obratz del nostre nbaissement entro fin aora, e quirem misericordia a Deu et a vos, que nos preguetz per nos lo paire Sanh de misericordia que nos perdo.¹⁰

< O Senhor juja e condapna los vises de la carn, no aias merce de la carn nada de corrupcio, mais aias merce del esperit pausat en carcer.¹²

> Vos devetz entendre que can esz denant la gleisa de Deu, que vos esz denant le paire le fil el Sant esperit.

This shows a clear recognition of the existence of two nature orders as we also find in the ‘Pact of the anonymous Cathar’, preserved in the *Liber Manicheos* by Durand d’Osca in which is said: ‘We proclaim that there exists another world and other, unblemished beings in which is vested our joy and our hope.’¹³

He who reaches this phase experiences a deep homesickness urging him to return to the house of the holy Father where His Spirit dwells. Fully determined, he enters the way of truth and righteousness.

The second phase is characterized by the dialogue between the mortal personality and the Spirit. For this to take place the candidate places himself within the framework of the Church of God, of a Christian brotherhood community. The ‘bonhomme’ of that time addressed the candidates with the words:

You must be aware that when you stand in the Church of God, you stand before the Father, the Son

and the Holy Spirit. For the Church stands for the togetherness of true Christians and thus for the Presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.¹⁵

It is the phase of the restoration of the Christian Book, i.e. the New Testament, and of the Holy Prayer, i.e. the Lord's Prayer, the essence of which is repentance and forgiveness. But these notions are not to be understood in a mystical or religious sense. Repentance will be present at once when the candidate unmask the vanity of his ignorance and accepts and agrees to follow the compass of the Spirit within him. Repentance is then a logical consequence of the active involvement of this Spirit.

For you are here, before the disciples of Jesus Christ, in a spiritual place where the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have their abode, in order to receive the holy prayer which the lord Jesus Christ has given to his disciples. Therefore, understand that if you desire to receive this holy prayer you must feel repentant for all your sins and must forgive all men.¹⁷

The understanding of fundamental unity makes all humans into brothers and sisters. Not in theory but as a very concrete and natural reality. As it is written in a 'Glose' (annotation) of the Lord's Prayer in the manuscript of Dublin:

'These people, where each loves the other, where each absolves his debtors, pray to their Father as indicated by the holy Luke: 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.'¹⁸

The most important form of dialogue between a Christian and his heavenly spirit is prayer. It is given him as a sign and a covenant for his union with the Spirit of God. As the Ritual of Lyon states:

We offer you this holy prayer which you receive from God and from us and from the Church so that you thereby receive the opportunity to pray it during your entire life.²⁰

< Quar la gleisa es dita ajustament, et aqui on so li ver crestria, caqui es le paire, el fil el Sant esperit.¹⁴

< Quar esz aici denant los decipols de Jesu Christ, el qual loc abita esperitalment lo paire el fil el Sant esprit, que vos deiatz recebre aicela santa oracio, la qual donec lo senhor Jesu Christ a sos decipols... Per la qual causa devetz entendre, si aquesta santa oracio voletz recebre, quar cove vos pentir de totz les vostres pecatz e perdonar a totz homes.¹⁶

> E si aquest poder ni aquesta pozeitat voletz recebre, cove vos tenir totz los comandamentz de Christ e del novel testament a vostre poder. E sapiatz que el a comandat que hom no avoutre, ni ausisa, ni menta, ni jura negu sacrament, ni pane, ni raube, ni faza az autre so que no vol que sia fait aissi, e que hom perdone qui li fa mal, e que hom ame sei enemig, e que hom ore e benezisca als encausadors et als acusadors de si.²²

< Aquesta santa oracio vos liuram, que la recepiatz de Deu, e de nos e de la gleisa, e que aiatz pozeitat de dir ela totz lo temps de la vostra vida.¹⁹

The third and last phase, as described in the Consolamentum, refers to the actual baptism by fire, to the receiving of the Holy Spirit by means of the laying on of hands.

In the first phase the candidate has become conscious of his fundamental spirit and in the second phase he has entered into an intense dialogue with his inner spiritual being. He is now ready for the mystical wedding, the spiritual wedding as it was professed by Catharism.

Pèire de Talayrac, a disciple of Pèire Authie, explains it to us:

'A marriage is forged between the soul and the spirit when they harmonize in the Good and when the soul does not oppose the spirit nor the spirit oppose the soul but both harmonize in the Good of truth and righteousness.'

This linkage brings forth a new spiritual force within man but in order to maintain it the new Christian must follow the commandments of Christ and of the New Testament. As it is explained in the Consolamentum:

If you would receive this might and this force it behooves you to keep the commandments of Christ and the New Testament in accordance with your abilities. And know that He has ordained that you must refrain from adultery, and manslaughter, and lying, and swearing oaths, and taking or robbery and not to do unto others what you do not want to have done to yourself, and that you will forgive those that have harmed you, and that you will love your enemies, and that you will pray for those that slander and accuse you, and you shall bless them.²³

Can we imagine a more brotherly-like relationship between all living creatures as is put forward in these words? Can we truly understand a love that encompasses our enemies, those who hurt us, slander us, steal from us and attack us? To my mind this was the spirit of brotherhood by which the host of men and women

were united in the Council of San Félix de Caramà 850 years ago. A spirit of loyalty and righteousness, not only towards spiritual matters but also directed at worldly matters.

As the ritual of the Consolamentum, brought to us to us in the Latin form, states:

‘And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbour as yourself. You will undertake to love God in truth, mildness, humbleness, mercifulness, chastity and all good virtues. As well, you will realise all that is necessary to be loyal and upright in worldly as well as in spiritual matters. For if you are not upright in worldly matters we do not believe that you can be so in spiritual affairs.’²⁴

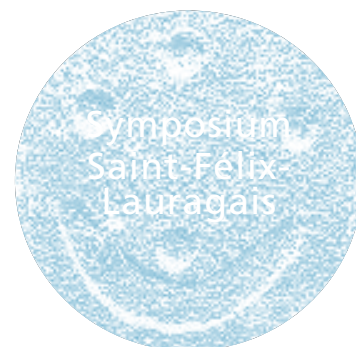
This universal concept of brotherhood, as professed in the Cathar community, was without doubt the same consciousness that permeated the great mystical movements of Sufism and Kabbalah in the Middle Ages. The clear declaration of ‘the three religions of the Book’ brought about a social and cultural blossoming in Western Europe and instigated a fruitful transfer of knowledge which guided and enlightened people in the following ages. It is without doubt a great challenge for our present-day 21st-century society to re-introduce this concept of ‘conviven-
cia’ and its spirituality to a society that yearns for new values to guide the true human evolution. ★

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The Path of the Cathars: a hermetic Gnosis

Tension as well as great opportunity signify the actual state of the world today. On the one hand the poignant spuriousness of a large number of our world leaders, on the other hand a growing group which tries to realise the values of 'Liberty, Equality and Brotherhood' (the motto of the congress) in their immediate surroundings. Which were exactly the essential elements of the initiation communities of the Bogomils and their kindred spiritual brothers and sisters, the Cathars.



More than 7 centuries ago, a phalanx of so-called 'Perfects', initiated in the Cathar Church, bore witness to this inner reality that leads to the rebirth of a pure soul inspired by the Spirit. They were also called Good Men and Good Women because the highest stage of initiation was accessible to both men and women, in accordance with the pure original Christianity to which the Cathars modelled themselves. This legacy preserved beyond the centuries constitutes a mystery for academic researchers and the speech of Mrs. Anne Baring gave us valuable elements to enlighten us on this subject. This direct reference to the purest Christianity was considered a threat to the Church authority of Rome. The latter, with the support of the King of France, instigated the Crusades and the Inquisition, which completely destroyed this spiritual move-

ment. But the poet Teulié in 1905 composed in a poem a prophecy that seven centuries after the pyre at Montségur the laurel would bloom again. Centuries have passed and we have now entered the prophesied period.

Our world has entered a phase of great tension. There are, on the one hand, numerous isolationist temptations, at the level of both nations and individuals. These are forces of exclusion and division that influence this part of humanity. On the other hand, there are communities of women and men who seek with ever more intensity a meaning in their lives, - who put into practice values such as sharing, solidarity, kindness, tolerance... Essential values for "living together". These Communities feel an inward call to unity, to fraternity, to liberty. This Universal Community of the Rose awaits a Sign. It waits for the living testi-

Sarcophagus with
a picture of the
deceased at Mokro in
West Herzegovina

CONTRIBUTION – SYMPOSIUM SAINT FÉLIX:
PIERRE GOHAR

many of those who have gone out to meet the Rose, that spark of Light that everyone carries in the depths of his heart. For it is from this spark of Light that comes the call to Unity, to Fraternity, to Love. This inner path, this encounter with the Rose, constituted the first steps of the path of the stars which the Cathars walked in the service of the Paraclete.

But to serve the Paraclete required an extraordinary transformation. This transformation was effected by a rigorous initiation in the sanctuaries of the Sacred Mountain of the high valley of Ariège. To date, no serious academic research has determined whether the caves of this mountain, located in the region of Tarascon-sur-Ariège, had an initiatory function in the process of sanctification on the path of the Perfection walked by the Cathars who aspired to higher priesthood. Only the historian Antonin Gadad developed this thesis in his book “On the Way of the Holy Grail” published in 1960¹. He was criticized by the historians of Catharism who described his works as “daydreaming”, without having themselves carried out any research work to confirm or reject it. The transformation which led to the state of perfection was so demanding that it required a specific environment. It is therefore not illogical to assume that this initiation took place in sanctuaries protected from the influences of the world. We invite those who would like to go deeper into this subject to read the book of Rachel Ritman: *The Christian-Gnostic initiation of the Cathars*². This initiation in the sanctuaries was based on a Gnostic vision of life and world. This vision was fed by ancient texts that the Cathars studied, like the Apocryphon of John³ or the Asclepius attributed to Hermes⁴. This last text confirms the hermetic orientation of the Cathar gnosis. Through this Gnostic orientation, the candidate sought the exit from this world and to once and again enter the Kingdom of Light to which he rightly belonged. This return to the Land of Light has always been symbolically presented as the ascent of the Sacred Mountain. This ascent also means tearing himself away from his own darkness, his personal pantheon of Archons. It is precisely in this movement of wrenching that the mystery of the *endura* of the Cathars has its place, this process of dying to all the attachments to this world, this death that gives life. In the final stage, this tearing away leads to the encounter with the Perfect Nature,





the one that incites Christian Rosycross enclosed in a dark subterranean pit, to grasp the rope of light which will hoist him out of the well of this world. This encounter with our Celestial Double is the culmination of initiation.

The steps of this ascent are constituted by the permanent love of God, of the Light, according to the invitation of the Gospels: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart."⁵ Only this love allows an intelligent and conscious renunciation of the world,

which is the very signature of a Gnostic vision of life. This renunciation builds an inner emptiness in which is displayed the silence which allows the emergence of a knowledge, a wisdom, of a very particular nature. "From what matrix and what seed was fundamental Man born?", Tat asked in the Corpus Hermeticum. "My child, it is Wisdom who thinks in the Silence, and the seed is the true Good" answers Hermes⁶. When the inner seed which is of the same essence as the Perfect Nature, floods its light within

the inner emptiness that the Perfect has instituted by the process of the endura, then Wisdom rises. This is the signature of the “rebirth”, which is the keystone of the Christian epic. This revival of a living soul, through its mediating function, restores the harmony between the microcosm and the macrocosm. This rebirth of a pure soul inspired by the Spirit was the first step on the long “path of the stars”. But contrary to a widespread image, this “path of the stars” did not keep the Perfect from the world. On the contrary, this path of the stars is that of an encounter with all the sparks of light, all the seeds radiating like so many shining stars in the firmament of the cosmic heavens. For the Perfect, this “path of the stars” was thus a priesthood in the service of “others” and it began during his or her descent from the Sacred Mountain, when the Mystical Gate which marked the boundary of the initiatory sanctuaries in the Sacred Mountain of the Valley of the Ariège was crossed.

This return to the world at the end of the ultimate encounter with Perfect Nature has been marvellously described by the great Iranian mystic Sohrevardi. Henry Corbin, the specialist in Iranian gnosis, translated his splendid stories in the book *The purple-red Archangel*⁷. In his *Narrative of the Occidental imprisonment*⁸, Sohrevardî very clearly indicates his aims: to invite “some noble brothers to share the supreme experience which is the Great Movement”, this wonder of the encounter with Perfect Nature, the power of which transfigures consciousness. The narrative describes the ascent of the high mountain, on the top of which stands a large rock that is the Word, “the oratory of his Father.” Suddenly, during his elevation, the pilgrim is struck by a sublime vision: “And behold, I saw our father in the manner of a Great Sage, so great that the heavens and the earth

were about to split under the epiphany of his light. I was amazed, stupefied.”

Here is an extraordinary description of the encounter with the Celestial Double, the Perfect Nature. But this sublime encounter also marks the beginning of a new mission.

The *Narrative of the Occidental imprisonment* continues: “I advanced towards him, and behold, to my amazement, he acknowledged me. I bowed before him to the ground, and was, as it were, annihilated in the light which he radiated. I wept for a moment, then I told him about the Qayrawan prison” (literally: the area of passers-by) He said to me: “Courage! You are saved. However, it is absolutely necessary that you return to the Western prison, for there are hindrances you have not yet completely overcome.” When I heard these words, my reason flew away. I groaned, cried out as someone who is about to perish, and I begged for mercy.

He said to me: “You are to go back, it is inevitable for the moment. However, I will tell you good news, too. Firstly, once you return to the prison, you will be able to come back to us again and climb easily to our paradise, whenever you want. Secondly, you will be totally delivered and liberated; you will come to join us, abandoning completely and forever the western country.”

As soon as the Mystic Gate was crossed, the Perfect was confronted with a new demand, a requirement which raised his perfection to an even higher level. For the retreat of this Sacred Mountain, the remoteness of these protective sanctuaries where the pure soul had grown, protected in this nourishing and benevolent matrix, demanded a surrender. In this supreme abandonment, the Perfect was freed from all acquired knowledge, all certainties, especially that of having attained the highest state of perfection. From then on, empty, wholly empty, he became infinitely full of that Light which had guided him throughout his initiation and which would guide his steps along

Once and
for all leave
the western
country be-
hind you...

.....

Ascent and descent, prayer and work, Ora et Labora, these are the movements of the Soul of Light on the path of the stars

his priesthood in the world. For how can we go to meet the “others” without that luminous void which alone can encompass in great compassion all the imperfections, all the sufferings, all the wounds. And this radiant compassion acted like a balm which healed those painful wounds of the time and ignited the yearning for a return to the Origin.

This emptiness and this inner availability obtained by the rigorous process of the *endura* gave the ‘perfect one’ the quality of welcoming every being in its totality. This integral welcome is a bond of a very special nature because its links are from the domain of the soul. But such a welcome is essential for the love bonding to take place which will constitute the healing balm, the consolation that reassures, nourishes and guides the gaze of the soul towards heaven and thus elevates it to the highest. Thus, the Cathar initiation, on the one hand, liberated the candidate from the bonds of this world and on the other hand connected him in an intimate way to the world. But these new ties were those of Love. And each step along this path, guided by Love, was inspired by the prayer, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”. The Perfect also remembered this passage from the Gospel of John 10: “The Father loves me because I give my life to receive it again. Nobody takes it from me, but I give it to myself. I have the power to give it, and I have the power to take it back. This is the order I received from the Father”. With a joyful heart, filled with that Love which unites everything in its inexhaustible flow, he went to meet this uni-

versal Community of the Rose to testify by his behaviour of this Love. By the gift of his life in the service of the “others,” the *parfait*, the perfect one, radiated that inner Light, that pure Light which inflames what is of the same nature and that each one carries hidden deep within his heart. The downhill descent of the Mountain is therefore a hermetic approach; it aims to find what can be elevated towards the Light, to connect it with this powerful and pure radiation to transfigure it. This downward movement is an intimate connection with the world because the love for the world is stronger than all. In this sense, it is the fulfilment of pure Christianity, as the invitation of the Gospel reminds us: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

Ascent and descent, prayer and work, Ora et Labora, these are the movements of the Soul of Light on the path of the stars. The Perfect demonstrated by his behavior these movements of the living Soul; it gave him the ability to pay special attention to all forms of life, while uniting them in a unified vision of the Whole, in accordance with the Greek axiom “En to pan”, which means “One All “. This paradoxical attitude is typical for the hermetic gnosis. In this sense we may say that Catharism, through its exemplary and inspirational behavior of the Good Men and Good Women, was a genuine hermetic gnosis.

Thus we may state that Catharism, far

Bogimils and Cathars were often ‘tisserands’, weavers. Stained glass window in Notre Dame in Paris

from being a dualist gnosis, was a hermetic gnosis. The testimonies in the records of the Inquisition show how the 'bonshommes and bonne femmes', literally the Good Men and Good Women, were working in society, with each other, humbly and with perseverance. But what did they expect from their action in the heart of the world? It is to this question that Hermetism provides an unambiguous answer: "Oh! Of what a privileged mixture the nature of man is made! He is united to God by a divine part within him which makes him alike the gods. The part of his being which makes him terrestrial, he despises in himself. All the other living beings to whom he knows himself bound by virtue of the heavenly plan, he unites to them by the knot of love. He raises his eyes to heaven. Such is his position in this privileged role of intermediary that he loves the beings who are inferior to him and that he is loved by those that rule him."¹⁰

It is thus in this triple movement: outwardly connecting with his fellow-humans, inwardly by connecting to them "by the knot of love" and upward by raising "his gaze to Heaven" that the work in the service of "others" was accomplished¹¹.

This triple movement is the signature of the "Friends of God" of all ages. This triple movement towards these three highly symbolic directions characterizes the work of the Triple Alliance of the Light. But what does this work consist of? Let us regard again the process of initiation of the candidate to the highest priesthood of the Cathar Church.

At the final stage of initiation, the Perfect received, as in a dream, the invitation to pursue his inner *Way of the stars*, the way to the spiritual world, far from the horizontal world and its turbulences, to join the phalanx of the Guardians of the Light, the Brotherhood of the Grail Guardians. Their mission is to keep active the ver-



tical branch of the Cross that connects our world to the Kingdom of Light. The Guardians of the Grail, by their orientation and their permanent aspiration, constitute a Sacred Cup in which the forces of the Spirit are poured out. This Cup must always be full because it is its overflows which constitute the holy foods that are offered in response to the yearning of the pilgrims for the heavenly Abode. These Grail Guardians constitute the first pillar of the Triple Alliance of Light. When the soul seeks to reunite with this fraternity, it attunes to this High Place.

But in the same dream, the Perfect replied with infinite compassion: “What about the others?” “All other living beings to whom he knows himself bound by virtue of the heavenly plan”, as the extract of the Corpus Hermeticum entreats us. The “others”, all those who feel like strangers in the world because the call of their spark of light, the embryo of the pure Heavenly Soul, does not leave them for a moment in peace. It is this spark of light that one of the Gnostic writings of the library of Nag Hammadi calls “a drop of Light”. This drop of Light that Wisdom has transmitted to men as a promise of immortality¹².

“What about the others”? The others of the Universal Community of the Rose awaiting a sign, an encounter, a light in the darkness? In response to this question, the Perfect descended from this Sacred Mountain where the daily encounter with the Light of the Light during his four years of initiation had profoundly transformed him. This transformation was a rebirth, that of a pure soul inspired by the Spirit. And it was this new soul, living, radiant, loving, infinitely free, who guided the Perfect in his encounter with the “others”. From then on, he

worked with his brothers and sisters in the Spirit, in the phalanx of those who hang the rose on the cross at every moment, at every encounter. By this sacred gesture he placed himself in the service of the Light of Lights. This mission, of the heart of the world, to proclaim the call to return, is a timeless one and bears the symbolic seal of the cross with roses. This mission corresponds to a path to the outside world in order to connect with “other living ones”.

The Perfect was offered a third path: that of guardian and guide in the initiation of candidates who were engaged in the demanding path of the transfiguration. He thereby entered the highest priesthood in the service of the Church of the Spirit, of the Cathar Brotherhood. This priesthood was based on three major aspects: preserving the high purity of the spiritual force-field of the Cathar Church - preserving the purity of the original teaching of Christ, of which the Gospel of John was a written testimony - and preserving the purity of the sacraments as they were practiced by the early Gnostic Christians, especially the Consolamentum. This path is that of inward movement towards the source of Gnosis, the source from which all the sacred writings and the purest acts emanate.

These three paths which opened to the Perfect at the end of his final initiation into the protected sanctuaries of the Cathar Church, answered a fundamental demand: that of always keeping the way back to the Origin open. This three-fold requirement has therefore been - at all times - placed under the responsibility of the Triple Alliance of Light: Grail, Cathar and Cross with Roses. The mission of this Triple Alliance, which forms an indissoluble whole, are timeless, they serve humanity in its long path to the stars.

It was under the wings of this Triple Alliance that the Community of Perfects placed itself in order to exert its priesthood in all its amplitude, the one so precisely described by these few words of Hermes in the Asclepius: “to admire and worship what is Celestial, to take care of earthly things and guide them¹³”. ★

1. Antonin Gadal, *Sur le Chemin du Saint-Graal*, Rozeekruis Pers ed., 1960
2. Rachel Ritman, *L'initiation chrétienne-gnostique chez les Cathares*, Rozeekruis Pers ed., 2012
3. Edina Bozoki, *Le Livre Secret des Cathares*, Beauchesne ed., 2009
4. A.J. Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste*, II, *Traité XIII-XVIII, Asclépius*, Les Belles Lettres ed., 1960
5. Luc, 10 27
6. A.J. Festugière, *id.*, II, XIII
7. Henry Corbin, *L'Archange Empourpré*, Fayard ed., 1976
8. *Le Récit de l'Exil Occidental*
9. Luc 10, 27
10. A.J. Festugière, *id.*, II, Asclépius, 6
11. We shall see later in this text that this triple movement, which describes the highest priesthood, is a projection of the spiritual lines of force that characterize the Triple Alliance of Light.
12. *Ecrits gnostiques* (Gnostic Writings), Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard ed., 2007, The Wisdom of Jesus Christ, NH III, 4, p. 643: “I have loosed this creation, I have broken the work of the tomb of the brigands, I have straightened this drop by Wisdom, that it might yield abundant fruit ...”
13. A.J. Festugière, *id.*, II, Asclépius, 8



'I do not believe that the goal of true and lasting peace can be reached without a world-wide spiritual revolution. By this I mean the overcoming of self-centredness, in both individuals and communities, by getting into communion with the spiritual presence behind the universe and by bringing our wills into harmony with it.'

Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975)

In 1222, during the first Crusade against the Albigensian, Count Raymond VII of Toulouse founded Còrdas (Cordes-sur-Ciel) as a retreat for the Cathars in the region. In 1993 it was voted 'favorite French village'.

Courtesy © Harold Davis –www.digitalfieldguide.com

'Pravi Krstjani' ('True Christians') and 'Bons Crestians' (Good Christians), the Bogomils and the Cathars called themselves. Under these names, they also brought their gnostic message of a Christianity that renews man's inner being, and makes him stand "upright" again before God – before the original Kingdom. However, in the Middle Ages, the French language had no specific word for the members of the "Cathar" brotherhood. The term Cathar was not introduced until 1849. The word bou(l)gre (Bulgarian), was often used in the middle ages in northern France as an indication of what would later on in history be called 'Cathar'. With this word it was conveyed that these new, enlightening teachings were of Bulgarian origin.



The forgotten Cathars of Mont Aimé

T

The word 'Bougre' was best known for the reign of terror of an inquisitor who would be remembered in history as Robert le Bougre. Between 1230 and 1239 he led the prosecution of the bougres (Cathars) in Northern France and in Flanders with extreme cruelty. After Catharism had been almost been eradicated in the South, Rome commissioned him to tackle the North of France. This became the signal for a holocaust that is almost forgotten in history.

The heretic hunter Robert le Bougre was given wings in a macabre sense by means of the papal permit letter that he wore upon his person.

With fierce mercenaries and archers he swarmed over the country and captured every citizen who seemed to deviate in the slightest respect from the prevailing collective convictions and belief system. Friday, May 13, 1239 was the undisputed lowest point in his sinister record.

In the week before Pentecost, 700 Cathars from the Champagne area were severely questioned. They were traced by raids on the always busy weekly market in the town of Provins. One of the chronologists mentions that "just being called a Bougre was enough to be captured and burned by brother Robert". On Friday before Pentecost Le Bougre led 183 innocent "Cathars, Manicheans and Bougres" – according to the sources – to a pyre on the mountain of Mont-Aimé, which was twenty kilometres southwest of the town of Châlons-en-Champagne. All this happened in the illustrious presence of Thibaut IV, King of Navarre, and of the barons of Champagne and, moreover, of the sixteen bishops from the surrounding cities. Only Sens's archbishop was not present. Perhaps this was, as the eyewitness reporter Aubri des Trois-Fontaines suggests, a silent protest... 'against the pyre sacrifice that was very big and pleasing to God....'

Left: Stylized image of a deceased person, the arms crossed over the chest, with a moon and triangle. Stone at Banjevac, East Bosnia



‘Master Robbaert’ and Hadewych

Robert le Bougre no doubt also crossed the path of the famous medieval Flemish mystic, Hadewych. We find her e.g. in the texts belonging to her *List of Perfecti*, following the manuscript of her *Visions*. This list also recounts a vision wherein it was revealed to Hadewych which people had loved perfectly and so approached Christ the most. After a summary of the intimate from what she termed ‘the direct circle’ (John the Baptist, John the Evangelist and Mary Magdalen), Hadewych goes on to the mentioning of 73 anonymous – for the inquisition was near! – contemporary people. Among them is also “a beghine who was killed by

master Robbaert for her just love.” In all this, it should be noted that perfecti from mystical circles are not identical to cathar parfaits or to gnostics. (For the difference see box).

Probably due to master Robbaert and his colleagues we know very little of Hadewych’s personal life. Her texts, written in her native language could have been widely spread because the average inquisitor had not mastered that language. But with regard to the person of the poet, discretion and distance were required. Even her very personal relationship with God – without the interference of any priest – could easily

place her under heretical suspicion.

The end of Hadewych’s life is swathed in mist. Literature historians sometimes wonder if it was not sped up by the brutal intervention of ‘master Robbaert’.

Who was this Robert le Bougre? Robert ‘the Bulgarian’ was definitely not a Bulgarian! His second nickname was Robert Le Petit. Initially he worked as a clergyman in northern France. Later, he gave up his soutane and be-

came active within the famous Bogomil-Cathar group in Milan. But after ten years, this confessional renegade suddenly returned to his native territory, now in the shape of a Dominican. He was instructed to commence and lead the hunt for the 'bougres'. Given his past as renegade, his superiors considered him able as no other to recognize Cathars – per solam loquelam et solo – by mere speech and gesture.

After the relentless Robert le Bougre had completed his holocaust in 1239, he was relieved of his task. As a reward for services rendered, he was shunned by the Dominicans and sentenced to eternal confinement in a monastery.

'Forgotten Cathars'

The name Robert le Bougre will for ever remain connected to the horrors surrounding Mont-Aimé. It took a long time before the historical research for this Cathar tragedy began. For this reason, one sometimes speaks of the "forgotten Cathars of Mont-Aimé". A few decades ago, the municipality of Epernay requested by petition that the government would grant Mont-Aimé the status of a protected historical monument. After the petition was not honoured, Epernay founded the Galaad association to promote the historical research for the Cathars in Champagne. One of Galaad's first activities was a renewed request to the French government to officially mark Mont Aimé as a historic monument. The request was in vain, which was remarkable considering 'la Champagne mystérieuse' had always been considered a "holy area" where the most diverse spiritually oriented groups could flourish. We should also not forget the active presence of the medieval 'Troubadours Champenois', which were the northern mirror image of the

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE MYSTIC AND THE Gnostic

"We are glad to use this opportunity to point out the essential difference between the mystic and the gnostic. Both build a soul body – both extract the essence from their life attitude which develops the higher ethers. If the soul body has become full-fledged, then both possess a sharp intuitive ability and then there exists continuity with the world of the spirit of life, the domain of Christ's power. Then there is a continuous influx of great forces taking place. Forces that enable those involved to come to a ripeness in life, to a broad vision of all kinds of life matters, to be united daily with holy values far beyond the understanding of ordinary humanity.

However, where the mystic continues to find satisfaction in this state of super-humanity, the gnostic moves forward. The gnostic's love for humanity is much more dynamic than that of the mystic. Where the mystic is satisfied producing and releasing love power in the service of leading forces, the gnostic wants to partake in, to give service to those leading forces. He wants to strengthen the magic order therein, he wants to consciously focus the flames of his love so that his power can be used as effectively as possible. There is something in his being that impels him to do so. In order to be able to do this he must, yes wants to penetrate behind the mystery of his existence, of the existence. Therefore, he seeks the gnosis of things behind the veil. Therefore, he needs to see consciously in the invisible areas, so that he will be able to trace the sources of things and work as a citizen of two worlds. On the one hand in the service of God and on the other hand for world and humanity.

Immediately, the difference in value is clear between the mystic and the gnostic work for the humanity. Where the mystic folds his hands in worship and prays for peace, where the mystic, through his intuitive ability, correctly indicates the mistakes in this sick society and proclaims to the people to reflect, the gnostic goes to work. In that work he deploys his dynamic powers to decisively fight the enemy, putting his foot on the battlefield of immediate action. And he or she does so from all areas of mind and life, according to the order of the gospel."

Extract by J. van Rijkenborgh, *The Call of the Rosy Cross Brotherhood*, Haarlem 1985

Occitan troubadours and had the same hidden messages in their love poetry. It is obvious that through them there was a strong connection between northern and southern France.

Not far from Mont-Aimé, the French working field of the Lectorium Rosicrucianum is planning to build a new conference centre. Undoubtedly, from this new light beacon impulses will spread that will permanently reveal in brilliance the events of Mont Aimé. ★

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.

World images



'Hate begets hate, violence engenders violence, hypocrisy is answered by hypocrisy, war generates war, and love creates love. Unselfish love has enormous creative and therapeutic potentialities, far greater than most people think. Love is a creative and life-giving force, necessary for physical, mental and moral health – it should not just be

preached but consistently practiced. Universal sublime love is the supreme value around which all moral values can be integrated into one ethical system valid for the whole of humanity.'

Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968)

Mostar, one of the most important centers of the Bogomils in Bosnië-Herzegovina



'Cosmic Consciousness is the goal of human development, whereby we as individuals become aware of our oneness with the Universal Mind and can manifest genius. These individuals know the Light of God in themselves. In the divine stillness, we can know the causes of things, while

their effects can be comprehended in the visible world of the senses.'

Cosmic Consciousness, Walter Russell (1871-1963)

The fall of Montségur in 1244 specifically meant the end of pure Occitan Christianity of the Church of the Spirit. The Bogomils could continue to profess their faith until the fifteenth century in Mostar, one of the most important centers of the Bogomils in Bosnia-Herzegovina. On the picture a group of Italian Bogomils in Montségur.

Heretics advocate places

GOTTFRIED ARNOLD ON HIS 'WITNESSES OF TRUTH'



the Bogomils in the light again

After the Bogomils had been almost literally driven into the sea as heretics by worldly as well as religious persecutors and by the Ottoman occupant of Eastern Europe, in Dalmatia, at the end of the fifteenth century, they seemed to be definitely erased from historiography – until the moment that an idiosyncratic productive German historian and theologian shed a new light on them in 1699. His 'Theology of the heart', unfolded in his famous book *Unparteiische Kirchen und Ketzerhistorie*, found a gratifying point of recognition in the Bogomil brotherhood of love, nestling 'in the heart of man'. His name was Gottfried Arnold.

The Bogomils proclaimed their teachings in a large part of Europe and managed to survive for five centuries: approximately from 950 to 1480. Their teachings spread over the entire Balkans, to Russia and Byzantium and further on to Italy and France, as well as along the river Rhine up to Cologne. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, they had so many followers that their universal wisdom became the state religion for some time. The Bogomils survived the Cathars for more than one and a half centuries. They strongly influenced them; they are sometimes called the elder gnostic brothers and sisters of the Cathars and we may regard them as the bridge builders of European spirituality.

The Bogomils (their name means: loved by God) taught that the world has a dual structure (a divine abode and a mate-

rial one) and that, in line with this, the human being has a similar duality. His body belongs to the earth, but his soul is divine and reminds man permanently of his true origin. Every human being can bring this duality to a unity in a radiant life, in which the two aspects merge into a dynamic whole. For this purpose, he must turn his soul – the seed of light, the spark of fire that corresponds with the primordial beginning, relinquished by mankind – into the leading principle of his life. Hence an ongoing process of inner purification will unfold, in which he is able to neutralise all kinds of undesired bonds in his life. His divine origin stands before him, ever clearer and clearer, without any need of mediation by priests or church.

To return to his origin, man should learn to deal adequately with the evil forces in the world and in himself. The Bogomils did not fight evil and did not try to erad-

This article is for the greater part derived from a speech that was held on July 3rd, 2017 during the annual IMC, the International Medieval Congress, that took place in Leeds, GB for the 24th time. 2500 congress participants from 57 countries focused on the subject: The Other and 'Otherness' in the Middle Ages.

Left: Sarcophagus with a woman holding up two birds and reindeer flanked by birds in Ubosko, East Herzegovina

icate it. They wanted to embrace it with love, allowing it to dissolve gradually, first of all within man himself. So far for this highly incomplete impression of the Bogomil teachings.

Court theologian as a source

During the lifetime of Gottfried Arnold – around 1700 – there was only one available detailed source for the Bogomils: the book *Panoplia Dogmatica* (Armour of Belief) from 1111, written by the Byzantine monk Euthymios Zigabenos. Zigabenos was Court Theologian of Emperor Alexios I (1056-1118) and had been given the imperial order to map all heresies of the Byzantine Empire in a book. Zigabenos drew the information on the Bogomils from days-long interrogation of the Bogomil leader Basileo by the Byzantine emperor. Bogomilism had spread so widely by then, that – to the dismay of the emperor – it even permeated into the highest circles of Constantinople. For a good understanding of what follows, the famous story is provided in short. Emperor Alexios had invited Basileos for an interview, on the pretext that the emperor was interested in converting to the Bogomil belief. Basileos explained the Bogomil teachings to him in the finest detail. By the end of this days-long interrogation, suddenly the ambiguous intention of the emperor became clear. Seated behind a black curtain, Zigabenos had written a detailed report. The Byzantine emperor subsequently forced Basileos to take back his statements and join the orthodox church again. When the Bogomil leader refused to do this, he and his followers were sentenced to the stake.

In the historiography up to 1700, this episode had only been described from the side of the ruler, the emperor. Zīgabenos admired Alexios' vigour to up-



GOTTFRIED ARNOLD Arnold wrote his masterpiece *Unparteiische Kirchen und Ketzerhystorie* deliberately in German and not in Latin and thus directly addressed the citizens of his country. He presented it as a book for everyone, in the language of everyone.

This 'Gesamthistoriowerk' brought Gottfried Arnold (1666-1714) abuse rather than glory in his linguistic area. He did not mince his words and knew no sacred cows. That provoked resistance, particularly in academic circles. The title ('The corrupt study of history') and the opening phrases of the inaugural speech by which he accepted his professorship at the Academia Ludoviciana, the Luwigs University of the German town of Hesse in 1697, are significant: 'The fact that the decay and the depravity of the best is always the greatest worry that we can imagine, is never more obvious than in the decay of historiography. History, when radiating in truth, is the basis of public law and a solid foundation for Kingdoms and Empires. However, if she is falsified, on purpose or by neglect, she often forecasts demise to thriving nations and empires.' Such a rebellious professor, who dared to confront the scientific establishment in such strong wordings, attracted full lecture halls to the sleepy town of Hesse, but was utterly unable to survive the loathed, 'narrow-minded' academic environment. After eight months, he tendered his resignation.

Gottfried Arnold studied theology in Wittenberg and subsequently became a private teacher in Dresden. In 1697 he became professor of history at the University of Hesse. He subsequently gave private lessons for a while in the quaint little town of Quedlinburg in the federal state of Saxony. From 1701 until his death in 1714,

hold 'the right belief' and the emperor's daughter Anna praised her father for his resourcefulness in getting rid of these 'despicable folks'.

The unique impartiality of Gottfried Arnold

How did Arnold deal with this episode from the Bogomil history? Before we go into this, it is useful explain to further the intriguing word he used: 'unparteiisch' (impartial, neutral).

Rightly it has been stated that there is no historiography more partial than this impartial one. Still we need to define the word 'unparteiisch' in a different way. Arnold writes his book from the view of an outsider who stands above the parties, a separatist who is not concerned with

the existing judgements. That is the true significance of this title word 'impartial': to write history without prejudice, without the imprints and clichés that have been widespread for ages. Hence the saying that the record of church history before Arnold had only one eye, which was not in the right place, as it always flirted with the party of the victors. Arnold however, finally brought two eyes into his consideration of the past, enabling him to observe church as well as heretic functioning.

Therefore, his historiography overturned everything in his time. For the orthodox were the real heretics and the former heretics the 'true Christians'. Opposite the distressing image of historic Christianity and its endless disputes, Arnold

he worked as a minister and a preacher. Arnold was primarily known as a brilliant historian of Christianity but – through his pastoral work – also as a representative of radical pietism (from 'pious') in Germany. Pietists disregarded as far as possible all worldliness and acted out of a deep respect for early Christianity. They sought personal conversion and practised a religious inner life. They combined this with pious family-mindedness and maintenance of the Sunday observance.

Among the forerunners of the pietists we find well-known names of people who pleaded a practise-oriented and devout Christianity throughout their lives. Jakob Boehme is one of them, as well as Johannes Arndt, one of the inspirers of Johann Valentin Andreae, the author of the Rosicrucian Manifestos. In his *Heretics and Church history* – as in his inaugural speech – Arnold devotes considerable attention to Jakob Boehme and to the Rosicrucians. He quotes a fragment of the *Fama* to defend the bonafide alchemy of the Rosicrucians against scholars who deliberately misinterpret this alchemy. He particularly turns against the French astronomer Gassendi, who had evoked a 'spectre' of the brotherhood and – in a polemic with Rosicrucian Robert Fludd – declared that he absolutely did not believe in the higher dimensions of alchemy.

In addition to his scientific and pastoral work in Germany, Gottfried Arnold had been active in the Netherlands as a member

of the 'Philadelphian Brotherhood'. This movement followed the example of the British 'Philadelphian Society', which arose under the inspiration of the physician and clergyman John Pordage and the well-known mystic Jane Leade. The main objective of the Philadelphian Brotherhoods was to study and practice the work of Jakob Boehme.

During his working life Arnold's many publications were usually received with disdain. The recognition came only later on. The well-known Dutch expert in the history of religion, J. Lindeboom, calls him 'the patron of heretics, who dominated the debate on the alleged heretics for more than two hundred years.' Goethe declares that he had been 'strongly' influenced by Arnold: 'This man does not only look at history with feeling, but he is devout, dedicated and empathic at the same time. His opinions are very similar to mine. I always thought that heretics were foolish and godless, but under the influence of Arnold I gained a much more favourable impression of them.' Gnosis-researcher Gilles Quispel frankly characterises Arnold as 'one of the best historians ever'.

The Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica in Amsterdam has an extensive collection of Arnold's work. www.ritmanlibrary.com.

placed – and this is a second significance of his word impartial – a superhistorical, yes, even a superconfessional principle: *the direct religious experience*.

He was convinced that only a historian who personally experienced the sense of inner enlightenment was able to make an appropriate historiography of Christianity. Otherwise he would lack the most important criterion for recognising the truth.

Indeed he put himself above all religious

FROM STRANGER TO RESIDENT OF HEAVEN

'The Other' and 'the Stranger' – over the ages these terms have become almost archetypal spiritual metaphors that have inspired many poets and thinkers and they are often recognisable for the aspiring pupil. A well-known line of verse from the Flemish poet Karel van de Woestijne (1878-1929) in the collection *Het Vaderhuis* (The Father's House): 'I am the stranger, who must go to autumn.' One explanation could be that the first-person narrator has been alienated from the delights of the summer of his life, when he still felt surrounded by God, and now sees the end of his life coming near.

The Bogomils also knew this 'strangership'. It was often only relieved when they – after years of intense preparation and inner purification – were granted the consolamentum, or the teleiosis; from this moment on the former stranger could call himself, in the Bogomil terminology: 'resident of heaven', *parfait*.



Image of Pegasus on a tomb in the Bogomil cemetery at Mesici, Bosnia

BECOMING AWARE OF THE OTHER WITHIN YOU

The Other within you is not going to be manifested through some method. It concerns him who is referred to as Pymander, your alter ego, the Other, the Spirit. This guide, who cannot be found on the horizontal plane of dialectics, is the one you need to search for. He wants to take you by the hand. You can only experience and view this Other in an extraordinary way from the spirit soul, the unity of spirit consciousness and of the heart that is purified in the gnosis. If you open your heart for the light of lights, the rose-of-roses will open. The colour and the fragrance of the rose will then console you. And if you follow the light in its aim and essence and make it circulate in your system, right through all the barriers, you will be able to secure the core of the light in the heavenly heart, in the open

space behind the frontal bone. You will then prepare this upper room in the appropriate way. And Pymander, risen from his sleep of death will take his throne in the upper room and celebrate the Holy Communion with you. (...) Pymander, the God within you, will then guide you to the gates of the Gnosis, to the gates of the Golden Head, where the clear light is radiating, where there is no darkness, no drunkenness, but everyone is perfectly sober. If you wish to enter these gates, if you wish to liberate this kingdom within you, you will first have to tear up the garment of ignorance, the garment of daily denial. That is the core task of pupilship of the spiritual school that you have to engage in every day. Extract from J. van Rijkenborgh, *The Egyptian Arch Gnosis and its Call in the Eternal Present*, second edition, Haarlem 1983, p. 44, 45 (Dutch edition).

parties and all groups that were trying to prove they were right and superior through dogmas and letter-worship. He had a deadly as well as damning judgment for these 'Mauerkirchen', churches that figuratively built a wall around themselves, compared to the real 'church of the open heart'. He called them: Babel. Protestantism had used this term for the Catholic church, the 'popish' church from which it had torn itself away. But Arnold meant all sorts and movements of Christianity that deployed worldly power to push their ideas through. Those churches and congregations were only based on a 'false kind of fake Christianity'.

Return of the true teachings of Jesus

Back to the Bogomils of Constantinople now. Let us first provide the introductory text of the chapter that Arnold dedicated to the Bogomils: *The bloodily persecuted Bogomils and their leader, Basileos, were the classic example of the fact that the so-called heretics, a term, invented by the deeply depraved clergy, were merely witnesses of the truth. It is the clergymen who should be called heretics. The orthodox themselves were the cause for heresy and the hypocrites of the Orient.*

This unambiguously sets the tone. How

does his extensive personal description proceed now? He had every sympathy for Basileos, the leader of the so-called heretic pupils. Not the condemned men and women were guilty, but the persons who condemned them. Not the Bogomils, but the orthodox persecutors were heretics and had renounced true Christianity. For being 'heretic' – the word is derived from the Greek *καθαρός*, pure – actually means a return to the true teachings of Jesus. The witnesses of truth suffer because they are opposed by the religious and secular authorities, who distort the true teachings.

That is the core of Arnold's defence of the Bogomils. The reason for this persecution was only to be found in the 'selfishness, the power politics of the clergy who felt threatened by the lay priests, (the perfecti) of the so-called heretics.' Arnold resumes: 'The clergymen saw their positions threatened because the Bogomils strongly condemned superstition and untruthful church services. That is why they said: 'Basileos was overshadowed by the devil and they rushed to get rid of him by having him burnt at the stake.'

Imitation of Christ in loss of self

Here Arnold takes us to the essence of the matter. The aggressive attitude of the established churches in East and West was

not mainly directed against the divergent belief in God. The cause for offence was the claim of both Bogomils and Cathars that sacraments, especially the celebration of mass, were not needed for self-liberation and salvation. The silent idea behind this was that the sacrament – a piece of bread becoming something divine through mass – was merely fictitious. That struck a nerve: the rejection of the symbol, the refusal to believe that the divine was transferred by a ritual system of signs. The latter was not more than a theatrical act in the eyes of the alleged heretics. The Bogomils, on the other hand, argued that they had people in their midst with a unique irenic radiation. That is to say: persons who were genuine human beings, genuinely purified people, who realised God's inner reality, also in their everyday life. The atmosphere and the radiation of these perfecti brought

Gottfried Arnold:

'Gnosis is the true completion of man through her wisdom in divine matters.'

about an enormous attraction. Thus, the 'success' of the Bogomils was not only rooted in their teachings or their social involvement, but rather in the practical assistance that they were offering, combined with the upright, impeccable attitude of their *parfaits*. They were persons with a high reputation and a high credibility; their teachings were fascinating because they were brought in simplicity and truthfulness and their consequent ascetic attitude towards life and high moral standard inspired people and provided them with a natural respect.

This is why Arnold could not possibly call the Bogomils heretics. They did not embody a deviation from the existing church, they did not make modifications. No, they introduced a totally 'different' universal religion, a religion of the deed – of practical neighbourly help – a religion of light and inner enlightenment, a religion of inaccessible charity, yes, of imitation of Christ in loss of self.

The mild Stranger

The Bogomils introduced a 'different', super-religious and super-confessional experience of God. 'Being different' for them meant first and for all: 'thinking differently' from the collective. This primarily implied letting go of traditions, detaching oneself, also from the often forcefully imposed doctrines that were passed on from generation to generation. One of the consequences of this process

was: taking one's own responsibility, conscious of the fact that every individual is called to freedom. And Gottfried Arnold was the first who acknowledged these aspects of the Bulgarian friends of God in historiography.

In the social sense, they generally did not belong to the 'others', the many exiles and outcasts of the medieval collective social order. They invented many ways to socially conceal themselves and made great concessions for this purpose. They even visited services of the prevailing church for this reason and held their own meetings at night most of the time. In their hearts they naturally felt themselves to be 'the others' and there are many testimonies to this fact.

Most essential is that the Bogomils were living examples of the significance of 'the Other within ourselves' for their contemporaries, meaning that they actually exhibited the efficacy of the spark of divine energy that is present in every human being. They thus formed an important link in the chain of the Gnosis over the ages. In early Christianity, this energy was sometimes called 'the friend of humanity, Jesus'. But already fifty years after Jesus, people were hardly able to recognise this power. That is one of the reasons why the church father and theologian Marcion (born in 85) called this power 'the mild Stranger', or 'the strange God'. With this indication of 'the Stranger' this great theologian meant nothing else than 'the perfect Other', a term that is now generally

used for the inner mystery in every man or woman.

It is the great achievement of the Bogomils and of Gottfried Arnold, that they reminded mankind in word and deed, in an engaging manner, of this *imago coelestis*, the image of the inner heaven that will always remain valid. ★

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.



Towards a Culture of Love

'Love is necessary for the transformation of the world. It is the only force which can bring peace between the nations, each of which has a mission to accomplish on earth. Love is beginning to appear; goodness, justice and light will triumph; it is simply a question of time. Religions need to be purified; they all contain something divine, but this has

been obscured by the repeated addition of human conceptions. All believers will have to get together and agree on one single principle: to make love the basis of any and every belief. Love and brotherhood, that is the common basis.'

Photo: Aerial balloons over Cappadocia, in the former Byzantine Empire, from which time Nikètas went out to the West. A beautiful imagination of unity in variety.

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Words of excuse by the catholics of the Ariège with regard to the Cathar drama



At the beginning of the third millennium, the former pope John-Paul admonished his church to ask God's forgiveness in a search of consciousness and a cleansing of memory. On March 16, 2016, 772 years after the *dies nefasti* of the execution of 2016 Cathars on a gigantic pyre at the foot of Montségur, Jean-Marc Eychenne, bishop of Pamiers, Couserans and Mirepoix did the same with regard to that specific event which meant the end of organized Catharism in the Ariège region.

After giving some citations from the sermon of his superior, he said:

"Our region of the Languedoc, which recently took the name of Occitan, dealt between the XII and XIVth century with a religious stream, in the XIXth century called Catharism – a religious stream of Christian origin that mixed Christianity with Manichean and gnostic elements.

In the same way that supporters of other religious streams were considered heretics by the institution of the Catholic church, the members of the Cathars were prosecuted and sentenced to severe punishments ranging from impris-

onment to death by fire. This occurred in Montségur, where more than 200 "clothed heretics", as they expressed it, were burned to death with their leader, the Cathar Bishop of Toulouse, Bertran Marty, on March 16, 1244. The stone monument on the Prat de Cramats is to this day the painful witness of this open wound.

In the year 2016 we as religious Catholics in the Ariège can only condemn these regretful acts. We ask God for forgiveness that our members and our institution have acted contrary to the Gospel. The Gospel in which Jesus the Lord gives us the command

Text spoken in the church of Montségur, October 16, 2016

to love our neighbor and not to counter violence with violence."

Eychenne continued by painting the position of the church at that time where it had to defend its doctrines as well as her power and influence. He concluded:

'Gradually, enlightened by the holy spirit, the church understood that no violence whatsoever is justified, however noble the cause may seem in defence of the truth. And he followed this up with: "We, faithful Catholics from the Ariège, ask for forgiveness. First of all from our Lord, but also from all those who were persecuted by the members of our Church. We realize today that the collision or confusion between temporary political power and spiritual power, between the state and the church, has become unacceptable for the life of the world and for her own way to the coming Kingdom of God. Precisely because of the mixing of these two areas, human dignity and integrity have been violated so often and so long in the history of our country and of the

Church, in the name of civil law, in the name of the Gospel, in the name of religious defense (the negotium fide) and in the name of higher state interest."

[...] *"Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace embrace."*
(Psalm 85, 10).

We pray for God's mercy, for His love that helps us in our weakness, so that we, Catholic Christians from the Ariège, but also all who live in our region, regardless of their faith, their religion or their philosophical beliefs, may undertake a serene search for peace and general well-being in mutual dialogue, with respect for differences and in mutual appreciation. All this in a spirit of goodness and trust in the human ability to become more human in every contact with our brothers and sisters. ☸



This article deals with the Bogomilian initiation process, describing two initiation rituals, after which we shall focus on the special abilities of the initiated and the specific way they used the Bible, especially the Sermon on the Mount and The Lord's Prayer.

Initiation with the Bogomils

Despite the cynical and hostile tone that Eastern-European Medieval chroniclers used regarding the Bogomils, they nevertheless spoke with respect about the Bogomilian 'Apostles' (the initiated). The Apostles brought their message of an undogmatic inner Christianity with great passion and a strong peaceful charisma, even though they lived in fear of bloody persecutions by both the worldly leaders and the ruling Church. In this they showed a very upright behaviour in any circumstances. The original Bulgarian religious-gnostic



"Christ's true church resides in the human heart"

movement of Pope Bogomil managed to affirm itself in the Balkans for five centuries (950-1450). Thanks to the power of attraction of their initiated ones, the Bogomils managed to spread out over a large part of Europe – Bosnia, Northern Italy, Southern France, the Rhineland, Greece, parts of Asia Minor and Russia. They gradually became the 'mentors' or spiritual tutors of the Cathars, whom they outlived for many years.

It was not easy to become an initiated Bogomil. Simply expressing the wish to become part of their community was not sufficient. The applicant had to go through a long preparatory process of true Christian life in which he strictly adhered to the example of Jesus. At the end of this process he or she could be initiated as a *believer*. Whoever wanted to continue to become an Apostle or a Parfait (and was able to) had to take part in a trial period for another three years. During that period, he was gradually taught all the wisdom of the carefully protected knowledge of the community, in order to prepare him for his life as a Bogomil Apostle in worldly daily life. At the end of this trial period he received the second initiation, the *consolamentum*,

which permanently united him with the divine life field and provided him with the possibility of bestowing this sacrament also upon others.

Double game of an emperor

Most facts on the Bogomilian initiation we find in the book 'Panoplia Dogmatica' ('Armor of the Religious Creed') by the Byzantine monk Euthymios Zigabenos. He was commissioned to write it by the Byzantine emperor Alexios I in the early 12th century. The content of the book by Zigabenos, who was a theologian at Alexios' court, was drawn from a conversation held over many days between the Byzantine emperor and the Bogomilian leader Basileos. Alexios had invited Basileos under the pretext that he was interested in being converted. Basileos, in good faith, told the emperor about his beliefs in much detail. Only at the end of the session the emperor's malevolent double game came out. From behind a black curtain a detailed record had been made of the conversations. The Byzantine emperor then attempted to force Basileos to renounce his statements and return to the Orthodox church. When Basileos refused this, he was condemned to the stake.

Left: Ducalsarkophagus
at Radimlja, Herzegovina

George Bernard Shaw: 'Every truly religious person is a heretic and thus a revolutionary as well'



Three years of abstinence and utmost purity

According to the writings of Zigabenos, the first Bogomilian initiation could take place when a novice had been through an ample period as a 'listener'. During this preparatory period, he could orientate himself towards the Bogomilian tenets

and confess all his 'sins'. He prayed intensely and at great length: seven times during the day and five times at night. He did not have sexual intercourse in that period, not even with his wife. One piece of clothing is all he possessed. If the listener completed this period successfully, he received the so-called *baptisma*. After

this ritual, he was initiated as a 'believer'. During this initiation, the gospel of John was put on the listener's head while the prologue was read out to him ('In the beginning, there was the Word...'), the holy spirit was invoked, and The Lord's Prayer sang. Through the baptism he obtained the privilege to sing the Lord's Prayer with the other believers. As a listener, he could not yet do so because he was not worthy of this prayer at that time.

The baptism was the prelude for a second phase that lead to the *teleiosis* or *consolamentum*. Only those who submitted to a life of rigorous abstinence for at least three years – who wished to dedicate themselves

to praying in an absolute purity and to study the doctrines intensely – would get through this phase. They fasted the whole day, did not consume meat, milk or wine. Whether a candidate succeeded in following these provisions and reached the required level of inner growth was judged by the community. At the end of this period the candidate would solemnly promise to attest to the endurance of his faith and that he would never reveal the secrets of the Bogomilian brotherhood to uninitiated persons. After all this, he was then ready for the ceremony of the second initiation: *de teleiosis* (perfection), which was also called the *consolamentum* by the Cathars: the sacrament of the Consoler. This was the only sacrament that the Bogomils acknowledged.

The way of life of the apostles

The Bogomil *consolamentum* had a dual function: an exorcism as well as a purification. First, the natural forces (the ‘devil’) that reigned until now within the ‘old human being’ was expelled through a prayer. Next, the candidate was washed in consecrated water from top to toe in order to obliterate all traces of the orthodox church baptism and to exorcize the ‘old human being’. After this, the candidate orientated himself in the Eastern direction. Again, they placed the Gospel on his head. All those who were present put their hands on the head of the candidate while they sang a liturgical hymn. This hymn was meant to give the candidate the strength to follow the precepts and beliefs of the Bogomilian community. Finally, he received the well-known black habit of the Bogomils. The initiated was now installed as ‘master’ or ‘apostle’ and took his place amongst the ‘perfects’. This we should recognize in the way it was meant in Matth. 19:21, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the

poor, and you will have treasure in heaven...’ The perfect one renounced possessions and residence and thus followed approximately the same life as the early apostles. He also promised to fast till the ninth hour of every second, fourth and sixth day of the week.

The initiated has become a birth giver of God

What did the *teleiosis* (the consolation) mean for the initiated and his immediate surroundings? First of all, he now had a superior immunity towards the allures of the world and of evil influence. He was now permanently bound to the divine life field and received his spiritual nourishment from it. He possessed a high degree of perfection (*savarshenstva*), and because of that we call him a heavenly being.

From then on, the initiated was not only an apostle but had also become a *theotokos*, a birth giver of God. Which means that he renews and produces divinity with every proclamation of the divine word and with every spreading of the divine light in the world. All this happens according to the well-known Hermetic principle ‘To receive everything, to give up everything and thereby renew everything’. This probably explains the extended apostolic mission that the Bogomils undertook in Europe. Besides, a perfect or *theotokos* – comparable with a *parfait* amongst the Cathars – is himself the living proof to the outer world that every human being can conquer his inner duality. The following Bogomilian poem aptly illustrates that.

*The body that we carry is a creation of darkness,
but our soul that inhabits it
is the first human being and the germ of light.
The first human being that prevailed in the land of
darkness will now prevail in his mortal body as well.*

The living spirit, that shone through the first human being
is now also our consoler,
the consolamentum.

Gnostic communication

A Bogomilian perfectus knew how to use a 'new gnostic clairvoyance' with which he could predict the future. This gift made a deep impression on even his most fervent adversary. Moreover, he knew how to use 'telepathic communication'.

In the book 'The Egyptian Arch-Gnosis, Volume 3', Jan van Rijckenborgh states that it is a source of wonder how the Bogomils managed to influence such large parts of Russia and the Balkan, despite their limited range. He furthermore writes that "the old Brotherhoods used a certain strategy whereby the individual participants of the work had higher qualities or powers. According to a masterplan, some of them spread out over those areas where centres were to be established. All leading brothers and sisters possessed these higher powers and so, wherever they found themselves, they could connect through telepathic and intuitive contact. In addition, they could establish a soul connection during their hours of sleep. In this way, a perfect coordination of the work was secured from the start."

From Nazareth to Capernaum

The Bogomilian perfecti used the Bible in a very illustrative and selective way. They used almost exclusively the New Testament, and set great store by the Sermon on the Mount (Matth. 5, 6 and 7) and the Gospel of John. The Gospel of John they lovingly called 'John Bogoslow', which means 'John's divine words', and they always carried it with them.

In a creative allegorical way that matched the actual situation of the listener and believer, they brought the New Testament to life for them. Their topographic biblical

symbolism especially appeals to the imagination. Bethlehem, which literally means 'bread house', is to them their own Bogomilian church that provides mankind with the truly living bread. Herod represents the ruling church and the world of evil, trying to kill the newly presented word or logos.

According to the Bogomilian rendering, Jesus' birthplace, Nazareth, stands for the orthodox church. As we know, Jesus left Nazareth to settle down in Capernaum, the city at the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee, which literally means 'the city of the consoler', and as such represents, just like Bethlehem, the Bogomilian church. Thus, we may describe the Bogomilian process of initiation via the following topographical steps. Jesus, (that is: the Bogomilian neophyte) moves away from the orthodox church (Nazareth) and is reborn in Bethlehem, the Bogomilian church. From there he travels over the often choppy Sea of Galilee (the turbulences of life) to Capernaum, where he receives the consolamentum (literally: the sacrament of the consoler).

'Purify me inwardly and outwardly'

The Bogomils identified themselves with the instructions in the Sermon on the Mount. They are true 'friends of God', true Christians (*pravi krstjani*) that do not need priests or outer rituals to stand in relation to the divine. One of the beatitudes from the Sermon on the Mount ('Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God') we recognize in a rare purification prayer that we also find with the Manicheans:

Purify me, my God.
Purify me inwardly and outwardly.
Purify my body, soul and spirit,
so that the seed of Light can grow within me
and make me unto a torch.

Wherever
they found
themselves,
they could
connect
through
telepathic
and intuitive
contact

.....

Let me become a flame
that transforms
everything within me
and around me
into Light.

Just as in the Sermon on the Mount, the Bogomils did not worry about what they would eat or drink nor about the clothing they would wear. They identified with the 'lily of the fields'. 'See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labour or spin.' 'So, do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear? These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.'

This passage was an incentive to them to put the proclaiming and the deepening of their knowledge of the 'true' Christian faith above all else in their lives. It also justified for them that their initiated apostles – the lilies of the fields – should abstain from common labour so they could dedicate themselves wholly to the word of God.

The central and actually only prayer the Bogomils used, the Lord's Prayer, was reserved exclusively for initiated believers and apostles. They prayed the Lord's Prayer seven times a day and five times at night at fixed times, even when they were away from home. Those at home prayed together. There were also secret nocturnal praying services in the homes of the Bogomils. During these rituals, they invoked the Spirit and prayed the Lord's Prayer while they prostrated themselves on the floor several times.

The Bogomils hardly changed anything in the official, ecclesiastical version of the Lord's Prayer, but they certainly put

their own accentuations on it. Famous is their version of the so-called fourth petition: give us this day our daily bread. The Bogomils prayed here: Give us this day our spiritual (*transcendental immortal*) bread. In another article of this edition of Pentagram the deeper meaning of this sentence is described.

Optimistic perspective

In historical writings, there is much emphasis on the intense asceticism and worldly detachment of the Bogomils. Because of this, we tend to underemphasize the enormous added spiritual value that they brought. The 'Cathars from the East' brought to humanity an impressive process of initiation, with which they proved that the human being can transcend the powers of duality of this world. Whatever was written about the Cathars goes for the Bogomils as well. They brought the liberating message that the divine spark that lives in every human being enables him to break free from his material prison. For that it is a prerequisite to strictly follow the example of Christ. They showed us how, through perseverance in prayer and conscientious asceticism, one can build a purified soul again.

The Bogomils thus did not bring a pessimistic teaching, meant only for puritans. On the contrary, they brought humanity an optimistic perspective on self-liberation that is still relevant today. ★

For literature references please refer to the editorial staff.

*'A man
who has understood Love
becomes immortal.*

*A man
who has understood wisdom
becomes complete.*

*A man
who has grasped Truth
becomes free.'*

Stone erected in memory of the visit of the 'parfait' Milutin to Foca, Southeast Bosnia. In his right hand a sword as a sign of his noble origin, in his left hand the beloved gospel of John.

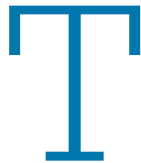


Peter Deunov

wisdommaster of love

His grave is like a timeless life program. Encircled with a white cast iron fence full of pentagrams, it shows the keys on the path of the new spiritual man: wisdom, truth, virtue, love and justice.

Daily, dozens of Bulgarians come to the lush rose garden in the heart of the Bulgarian capital Sofia, where the wisdom teacher and heir of the Bogomils, Peter Deunov, lies buried. They reflect, make subdued music or read a text from his immense spiritual legacy.



That spiritual testament includes over 7000 lectures. They can be divided roughly into four categories. In the (five o'clock) Sunday morning lectures Deunov (1864-1944), also known by the name of Beinsa Douno, speaks to his students and listeners about the 'new heaven'. On Sunday afternoon, again at five o'clock, he talks about the 'new earth'. On Wednesday at five o'clock in the evening he focusses on the 'living forces of nature and the cosmos' and on Friday at five o'clock the 'new man' is the central topic.

Love, wisdom and truth.

*"Have love for the perfect path of truth and of life,
use the Good as a foundation for your home,
Justice as a measure,
Love as a jewel,
Wisdom as a wrap,
and the Truth as a lamp
and I will reveal myself unto you.
In the fulfilment of God's will lies the power of the human soul."*



This quote describes the foundation on which Deunov builds up his “new teachings”. It has three basic principles. First of all, the love that brings true life, furthermore the wisdom that generates light and the true knowledge, and finally the truth that brings unlimited and full freedom. But of these three, love remains the ever-returning *Leitmotiv*: “My teaching is about living nature, about the people and about the intellectual achievements of this world, but especially about God, because it is a teaching of love.” Not without reason the writing on the fountain in the rose garden proclaims, with big Cyrillic letters: “GOD IS LOVE”.

Blossoming of the human soul

For Deunov, humanity is, in a spiritual

sense, heading for a turning point of times. So far, the human soul has not been developed much further than “a bud”. But in the coming new era this bud will open. That is one of the greatest events in the All and is called the “blossoming of the human soul.” “You are souls, once received in the Spirit of God, and now you have the opportunity to flourish and bear fruit. That will gratify God. This thought will lay a basis beneath your existence so that you will start to understand the meaning of life and always find the One Way.”

On this path, however, there are also sufferings and bindings, which also Deunov cannot deny. After all, man permanently has to reckon with his dividedness, with his dual nature: matter and spirit.

That physical element is “wrapped” in the “I-personality”. This is distinguished by dualistic characteristics like joy and sadness, love and hate, envy and dedication. When man steps out with his personality, he stands on the “lowest step” of his life. The origin of that personality lies in the consciousness of man, the mother of the personality. The “I” is the father of the personality. Presented in this way, consciousness – the lower self – and the I, the higher self, form the pair from which the personality is derived. Above this pair stands the di-

vine Monad, above the monad the divine soul and above the divine soul stands the divine spirit.

Preparation class

“The life of the personality is, in fact, just the preparation class of the big School of Life” says Deunov. “In man the personality represents the life of the flesh, and the divine in him the life of the spirit. If the mind now comes in the first place for man, then the personality must be satisfied with a lower place. There where the spirit lives, the flesh dies. Where the flesh lives, the spirit dies. Why? Their nourishment is not the same. The spirit cannot lead his life into the right direction with the nourishment of the personality – he lives his own life.” Why can’t the personality live in harmony with the spirit, Deunov is often desperately confronted with. “That is because those two have swapped places. But some day, when everything falls into place, the personality and the spirit will once again be in harmony and in unity with each other. At some point the personality will realize, by the awakening divine element within her, that it does not live for itself and that it should hand over the guidance to the immortal soul as the carrier of purity, holiness, brotherhood, harmony and peace.”

Gandhi

Peter Deunov is often seen as an heir of the deeply rooted spiritual tradition that began with the Orphic mysteries of the Thracians in Eastern Europe and was strongly carried on by the Bogomils. With his message of love he travelled the whole world. In India, even Gandhi was among his students. In his own country, he built up tens of thousands of followers who united themselves in the White Brotherhood. The authorities feared but

Deunov on prayer

Praying is the most important work in the life of a human.

Through prayer, man receives energy from the Divine World.

Prayer is the inner necessity of the soul.

When the soul is cut off from prayer, she dwells in great darkness and she experiences a poignant lack.

Prayer is the conscious work of the human soul.

When you pray, the soul steps out of the ordinary consciousness of everyday life. We can describe this as “breaking out of the narrow restrictions in which we live.” Prayer is our permanent connection with God. Prayer is like a form of science: it takes a very long time to master it.



Left: Deunov and friends watch a 'paneurithmic' dance performance. Right: Modern members of the White Brotherhood show a representation of the cosmos: center, twelve rays and three peripheral circles

also respected him. The latter was proven during World War II when he was secretly consulted about the possible prosecution of the Jews in his country. Deunov's natural authority proved so great that his message of love made the breakthrough: not one Jew was prosecuted in Bulgaria! After the revolution of 1989, Deunov gained an honorary place in the collective memory of the Bulgarians. This was reflected in the election of the greatest

Bulgarian in history in which wisdom teacher Deunov finished second, after the Bulgarian freedom fighter and national hero Vasil Levski (1837-1873). ☼

An evening in Mostar. But not an evening in our century. In my imagination I set out for the Mostar of the ninth century, even then an ancient city, dating back to Roman times. Here we find one of the most important centre stages of an equally old but always re-emerging pure Christian faith.

I follow a small group of simply dressed Bosnians through the narrow streets of their town. On every street corner colourfully dressed men and women pass each other by – either on their way to the Greek Orthodox Church, a church with bright rituals and heavy music, or heading for the theatre, adorned just as flamboyantly. Distinguishing between Church and theatre is hard, because both groups are laughing merrily and they are equally splendidly decked out.

The men and women which I follow are quiet, unpretentious and not distracted by it. With determination they cross the magnificent bridge of Trajan, with a single stone arch spanning the rapidly flowing and rock-strewn stream of the Narenta.

They stop at a barn-like building of austere stone walls and a thatched roof, not at all suggestive of a temple behind its doors, a temple dedicated to the most



An evening in Mostar

a visualisation

Supreme... They step inside and I follow them.

The large, bright space with its white-washed walls and rough-wooden benches is soon filled with more of these quiet, friendly people, men and women together. There are neither columns or pillars, nor decorations, pictures or icons. We will not find a richly decorated altar here with golden chandeliers and chalices. But at the very back of the area a wide table is set up, covered with a white linen cloth. The only object on the altar here is a hand-written New Testament and a rolled out parchment, containing some of the inspired hymns from the old apostolic church – the only signs from which one can deduce where the leader of the congregation may be found.

An old man, whose white hair cascades in curly locks onto his shoulders, sits beside the table. He also wears the same simple Bosnian farmers clothing of those days and in no way differs from the other men of his age. His finely featured wise face is somewhat hidden by his hands. Posture and gesture suggest that he is engaged in prayer.

Then he stands up, kneels – followed by all those present – and greets them sincerely with a glowingly clear prayer, full of strength and dedication, perfectly showing he is worthy of his name Bo-

gomil – “the man who prays”. His name may also be translated as ‘Friend of God’.

At the end of his prayer, the congregation joins him in the Our Father, which is affirmed with a clearly audible ‘amen’. Then a song in a beautiful rhythm of tones is raised, returning to the same melodies that were sung by the Apostles and Mani. This is followed by a reading from the stories of the New Testament. After he has returned the invaluable manuscript to its place, he continues to explain to his finely tuned audience the character and the symbolism of their great example, Jesus-the-Lord. He tells of his non-ownership, how he was rejected by his own people, how he always pointed to the coming Kingdom – immanent, within man.

He talks about the inner meaning of the cross and the crucifixion and his return in the clouds of heaven, which every human being must imagine and realise in their innermost self.

He talks about how this spiritual being walked on earth in a semi-glorified body for six weeks, learning, teaching and radiating power.

And as he describes how Christ realised ‘the end of all death’, it is as if the congregation, like Stephen, sees the gates of Heaven open.

And he quotes Hymn 24:

FRANK VAN EYSEL

Left: Image of the deceased with decorations on a tomb in Tekija, East Bosnia



Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory” (KJV)

In serenity and strength this Bogomil describes to them the inner Kingdom and he outlines the richness of the spiritual life, compared to which the scorn, the interrogations and the persecution of those days sink into nothing.

And in all of this there is no element of raising the emotions, no erotic sublimation or personal satisfaction, but an

atmosphere so spiritual, so pure and truly sacred, that no one but the ‘pure of heart’ can enter.

And after another ‘Our Father’, the brothers and sisters of the brotherhood of Bogomils depart. Again they cross the bridge that spans the Narente, still full of the pure experience, still full of the living Gnostic Word, still full of the certainty that they, too, from within, belong to the Kingdom.

And as they disappear into the narrow streets of Mostar city, I travel back to my twenty-first century.

This is what they prayed at the end of such a glowing, simple pure Bogomil meeting, inwardly resonating with the Gnostic Our Father:

God Almighty
Whose foot rests on the highest
firmament
Great mover of the universe
and all the powers therein
Hear the prayer of your servants
who put all their trust in you

We pray that you
Will allow us day by day to receive
your divine life essence,
for comfort and strength,
for your glory, and for the salvation of
mankind

Forgive us when so often we deviate
from your ways,
as we forgive our brothers and sisters
Be near and in us
Strengthen and sustain us,
as we are but instruments in your
hands

Protect us in danger and evil
and do not leave us in our temptation
May your mighty power for ever
sustain and protect us

You are the great Source of Gnosis and
wisdom
Teach your servants by your holy
presence
and lead us, now and always

Amen



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